

# ADVENTURE PROBE



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VOLUME 6 ISSUE 12



MERRY XMAS

A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO  
EVERYONE.

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ADVENTURE PROBE

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It will be assumed that letters sent directly to June Rowe (Letters Editor), 48 Hurdon Way, Launceston, Cornwall, England, PL15 9HX are for publication, all other communications should be sent to the address below.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Copies can be ordered monthly or in multiples up to 12 issues; sorry no discount for quantity. Prices per issue: U.K. £2.00, Europe & Eire £2.50. Rest of World (Surface) £2.50 (Airmail) £3.00. All payments in pounds sterling please. Cheques/Crossed Postal Orders or International Giro payable to **ADVENTURE PROBE**. Please do not send cash.

### BACK ISSUES

All back issues are available, at the above prices. Volume 1 comprises 19 issues (June 1986-Dec 1987), subsequent volumes are 12 issues Jan-Dec.

### ADVERTISING RATES

Short, private advertisements in the In-Touch section are free to subscribers. Trade prices are: FULL PAGE £5.00 HALF PAGE £3.00 but one page per issue free (subject to available space) for regular subscribers i.e. 3 issues or more in advance.

### DISTRIBUTION

Adventure Probe is distributed during the first week of the month (but will be a little erratic until I get back on schedule) Copy date for contributions and advertisements is 14th of the previous month.

### CONTRIBUTIONS

All contributions are gratefully accepted. Please keep me well supplied with computer and adventure-related material. It doesn't matter how brief the entry is, it may be the very information someone has been waiting for. It will be very helpful if items for different sections are on separate pieces of paper. It doesn't have to be printed or typed, but best handwriting will be appreciated, as I am not familiar with every detail. When you submit an entry for the IN-TOUCH section please mark which are adventures, utilities, arcades, etc.

### POSTAL ADDRESS

Please send all correspondence, subscriptions, etc. but ~~no~~ letters for publication, to:

Barbara Gibb - Editor, Adventure Probe, 52 Burford Road, Liverpool L16 6AQ.  
England. U.K.

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## HALL OF FAME

Many thanks to the following readers who have sent in contributions since the last issue:

Barbara Bassingthwaite, Laurence Creighton, Sharon Harwood, Mary Scott-Parker, George Kersey, Richard Batey, Neil Shipman, Alf Baldwin, Simon Poxon, June Rowe, Keith Burnard, Philip Reynolds, Tim Kemp, Steve Clay, Peter Clark, Grimwold, Vince Barker, Martin Bela, Jonathan Scott, Chris Wiggins, The Grue!

Special thanks to Margaret Crewdson for the cover picture, and Geoff Lynas for an excellent printing job from some dodgy proofs.



Erratum: In the WORDSEARCH on page 25 of the supplement, on line 2 the fourth letter from the left should be an A (not a T) and the seventh letter should be an l (not an H). Sorry.

## EDITORIAL



Dear Readers,

First, I wish to pass on some news concerning Joan Pancott. She has to go back into hospital on the 17th December to have her other knee replaced.

Dear Joan, all your friends at Adventure Probe wish you all the best for a successful operation, enjoyable Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year. We all miss you and Maurice.

Many thanks to Keith Burnard and Mary Scott-Parker for their contributions to the stock of prize. If anyone else has anything to offer, please forward it after the Christmas holidays - the wider the choice, the more incentive to win the competitions.

I know some of you never look at the RPG section, but this month it may be of special interest to any of you who have a copy of Dungeon Master but never managed to get into it. I was getting interested just typing the article; if I had the game I would probably have attempted it over the festive holiday.

As a special offer to advertisers, and to bring Adventure Probe in line with other fanzines, I have amended the advertising rates. Please see the inside front cover for details. Also, in case any readers are keeping a check on their subscriptions, and wondering why they haven't received a renewal form, it is because no one is expected to pay for the July issue, and I have extended the subscriptions to take this into account, for example, most of you paid 6 months in advance, and are in credit up to and including the January 1993 issue.

I hope you all enjoy this special Christmas issue and supplement. It wouldn't have been possible without some outstanding contributions. It has taken weeks to prepare, working up to 16 hours a day. I used a ream of paper and 4 ribbons, and didn't have time to check all the puzzles - I have an awful feeling I have overlooked a few mistakes but trust they won't spoil your enjoyment. I will be much better prepared next year.

Best wishes to everyone. We hope you all have a Happy Christmas, and a prosperous and peaceful New Year.

from

**June and Barbara**



## LETTERS

edited by June Rowe



From Neil Shipman, of Bristol ...

In the September issue of Probe, Alison Bailey asked for advice on what computer(s) to consider buying with her £700 inheritance. I think you should definitely be looking at a 16 bit machine now, Alison - Atari ST, Commodore Amiga or IBM-compatible PC. Bearing in mind that your two principal requirements are the availability of adventures and a good word processor, you can virtually ignore the ST. There are very few adventures being brought out for this nowadays, mainly because it had never been well supported in the USA. More adventures are available for the Amiga but even this computer is tending to be overlooked by the game developers as they concentrate their efforts on the PC.

With the amount of money you have to spend - and with an eye to the future - I would recommend that you think about buying a PC. The minimum specification you should consider is a 386SX machine with 2Mb of memory, a 40Mb hard disk and an SVGA colour monitor. You could definitely purchase a set-up like this for around the £700 mark, if not less. As prices are coming down rapidly you'll soon find that you could afford a faster machine with bigger hard disk and more memory. If this is the case then the minimum specification can be up-graded - you wouldn't have to think about yet another computer.

You will find a huge variety of adventures for the PC including nearly all the late Infocom titles recently released in compilation form as *The Lost Treasures of Infocom I* and *II*. You should, however, be prepared to spend a lot more on software than you have been used to doing (£25-£35 is fairly typical) although there are many good adventures available cheaply as Shareware or PD. As far as word processors go, the range is enormous, from the business-oriented costing hundreds of pounds to the cheap but adequate Shareware. I think I have even seen a PC version of *Tasword* advertised in the magazines.

I suppose the only drawback you may find about having a PC is having to get used to the operating system, although MS-DOS 5.0 (which should come already installed on the hard disk) has a fairly easy-to-use "DOSshell" with comprehensive on-screen help. In the decade that I've been adventuring I have progressed from a ZX81 to a BBC Micro, then an Atari ST and finally a PC which I bought 16 months ago. The step up from 48K Spectrum to a PC is a large one but there seems little point in stopping at, say, an Amiga if you can afford to make this leap. Check out magazines like *Computer Buyer*, *Computer Shopper* and *PC Direct* for hundreds of adverts and lots more information and if you can, try to find a local dealer where you can see running the software you are interested in.

I hope other readers write in with their views. Happy adventuring.

\*

Thank you for your useful advice, Neil. I'm sure that, along with Steve Clay's letter, Alison will find it interesting reading. As will another reader (see Peter Clark's letter) who is also thinking of up-dating. (June).

\*\*\*\*\*

From Steve Clay, of S. Wirral ...

Alison Belley asked for information on the various computers available - here are some of the things I've learned since buying an Amiga A600.

First off I would say she already has the best machine for text adventures. With the exception of the Infocom games there is little in the text field to set the pulse racing. The fact that Zork I takes up only 119K of a disc was a slight surprise. If you are looking at graphic adventures then the Amiga is well catered for. I've only played Kings Quest 2 so far and the graphics and sound were a real let down.

Word processors can cost as much as £100 but I've read recently of a licenceware disc from Deja vu (tel: 0842 495281) which, according to the Amiga Shopper review, offers most if not all of the features of WP's from commercial firms. The reviewer said he would be using it for his future work. The program is called POWER TEXT and Deja vu licenceware costs around £4 plus approx. 60p postage.

When you do buy your new computer, remember to get an extended warranty - vital with the costs of repairs being what they are. Tandy charged me £78 for an extra 3 years on my warranty.

The A600 comes with no BASIC as such although the workbench allows you to tinker around. A point which may be of interest is that the A600 series has been recommended for use in schools.

Another thing to note about disk based computers is that you have to back up your original disks. This means you'll need lots of blank disks. Don't worry - they cost around 60p each.

The major drawback with the A600 is the compatibility problems. This, as you can imagine, is a pain when buying software. Special Reserve (PO Box 847, Harlow, CM21 8PH) tells you in the NRG magazine which games do and don't work with the A600. No other mail order company does this from what I've seen.

I've just seen an advert for Amiga Format - there will be a word processor, SCRIBBLE, on the December issue coverdisk.

\*

Decisions! Decisions! I'm glad it's Alison who has to make up her mind and not me! (June)

\* \* \* \* \*

From Peter Clark, of 459 Bramford Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 5JH ...

As a confirmed Amstrad 8 bit user, even I can see that the days of the 8 bit computers must be numbered. That being so, I have decided that a second computer of the 16 bit variety is the order of the day. No, I do not intend pulling the plug on my trusty 8126 and will continue to use it for both playing and writing adventures for as long as I am able. In the meantime, however, I feel that I must come to grips with another machine before the Amstrad dies on me and becomes part of the great micro chip in the sky!

I have decided that the Atari 1040 is probably the best for me as there is already one ST in the family so some utility software will be available.

However, what I would like is some help from any Probe reader with ST adventure experience.

I would be grateful for suggestions as to the best adventure software available for this machine, both commercial and PD, and also an Adventure Creator program. I believe that STAC is still available, but have not seen it advertised anywhere. Also in Gail Williamson's book "Computer Adventures, the Secret Art" a shareware package is referred to, called AGT (Adventure Game Toolkit). Has anyone had experience with this program? I would be most grateful if any reader with advice on the above problems would contact me.

\*

Hopefully, at least one of our friendly readers will write direct, which is why I have included your full address, but maybe you will have second thoughts after reading Neil Shipman's letter, and decide to up-date even further! (June).

\*\*\*\*\*

From Vince Barker, at present in Saudi Arabia . . .

The last few months since I moved out here to work became a little confusing as far as Adventure Probe went. Shortly after arriving here at the beginning of June I heard through the grapevine that Probe had finished, then received my June issue (via my wife at home and albeit a little late) and everything seemed quite normal. What is going on back in good old England, I thought. Now at last everything has been explained and Probe is still on the go to which I have renewed my subscription. For all the adventurers back home, I would like it to be known that I haven't vanished off the face of the earth but am stuck in the middle of the Arabian desert. If I had known beforehand that there was going to be so little to do or places to go in my spare time I would have brought my humble C64 out with me. Alas, that was not to be, but rest assured it will be coming back with me when I go on leave in January. I have already started collecting a few new games from Jack Lockerby and The Guild and am looking forward to getting back into adventuring next year. It is great to see so many new games becoming available for the C64 and to the people concerned I send my thanks. Anybody who may require help on C64 adventures can contact me at my home address (from January 16th - 25th) if you can wait that long and I will be only too pleased to help. I would also like to take the opportunity of publicly thanking everyone who has helped me in the past and in particular the likes of Mandy, Walter Pooley, John Barnsley and Dorothy Millar (with whom I still regularly keep in touch via Saudi/Australian post). I would also like to add that you are quite at liberty to publish my address here in Saudi Arabia just in case anyone wants to contact me for one thing or another. In the meantime good luck with Probe, as I, more than anybody, need it out here in the desert sun to stop me from going insane in this land of weird customs and lifestyles.

\*

I don't have Vince's home address, but his Saudi address is:

c/o National Titanium Dioxide Co. Ltd., (Cristal)

PO Box 30320

Madinet Yanbu Al Sinaiyah

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

I think I'll send a Christmas card with some snow on it to this faraway adventurer - nice to hear from you, Vince. (June)



From Grimwold, of Someplace, Somewhere ...

My, my, doesn't that 'Cockroach' get himself (*could be herself, Ed.*) worked up? Good job us dwarves are a lot easier going, else all you adventurers would be wearing a lot more axes! Anyway, I thought I'd do my best to answer one or two of the irate insect's questions.

In regard to conversions, they do take place. Philip Reynolds of Adventure Workshop (*see adverts elsewhere in the magazine, Ed again*), seems to be very busy converting adventures to the Amstrad, as well as to other formats. Although he does seem to be the only one, that I know of, who converts regularly to the Amstrad at least.

The Guild, as I understand it, transferred its stock of Amstrad titles to the Adventure Workshop to concentrate on the Spectrum market. The Workshop now sells tape and disc versions of Amstrad games (except for PAWed games, which are disc only) while The Guild could only do disc copies. The prices are the same, so perhaps 'Cockroach' should make a brief excursion from beneath his damp stone and send for a full list.

As to the sequels query, I can't answer that, although perhaps it mirrors the film industry in that having had success with one film or program, the writer decides to cash in on that and writes something with the same characters.

Good question about Zenobl (mention no names); one that I think only the 'fat old sod' in question can answer. It all seems a bit silly to an old dwarf.

I think Cocky has misinterpreted the ideals behind software writers and publishers. Perhaps the 'software moguls' in question existed in the early days of adventuring, and maybe today in the 16-bit sector, but with 8-bit games, the majority of games sell for around £2 on tape. Given the limited market for adventures anyway, there is very little money to be made. Of that £2, usually 50p goes in royalties to the author, which will barely pay his or her electricity used in writing the game, 50p will go to the publisher for advertising etc. and the remainder is given over to the tape and p+p.

If 'Cockroach' thinks that this sort of money keeps anybody in luxury, I'd gladly swap my modest mine for his place any time! I've even had to put my gold hoard in hock to see me through the recession (you can tell it's getting bad when the dwarves start to complain!).

Better go - I've got a whole herd of dragons to kill before tea and this flexi-time that's been introduced to the dungeon take a bit of getting used to.

■

Possibly the 'Cockroach' is afraid to come out from under his stone in case someone picks it up and drops it on his head, or in case he gets stepped on by an angry dwarf! (June)



From Mary Scott-Parker, of Carlisle . . .

You have asked for comments on the new look Probe, so here goes. I've been putting off writing for a while now, because I have to begin with a criticism. My favourite bits of Probe seem to have gone. My three main areas of interest were as follows: a) The letters page, b) 16 bit coverage and c) Funny poems, articles and stories. I also enjoyed any 8 bit reviews that were amusingly written.

First of all, I was rather taken aback at the idea of a different letters editor. For me, the letters now lack the 'round the coffee table' tete-a-tete feel of Mandy's pages. By saying this I'm not criticising June's capabilities in any way. Just making an observation that a three way letters page is not as cosy and intimate.

Steve Clay (letters page, August) was quite right in what he said about the lack of 16 bit contributions. Every adventure I've got has already been 'done' by someone else, although if required, I could send in different hints for these same, older adventures, like Dungeon Master, as new adventurers to the 16 bit games may appreciate them. Lastly, I am sad to see the funny articles and poems, which manage to cross the format barrier, severely depleted. Are they no longer in demand? Am I the only one who misses them? I'm still waiting, with bated breath, to see how the SOMA (Story Of Many Authors) begun in November will end. I thought the quality of the first two episodes was excellent and would love to be able to read on. I think as a punishment for setting such a high standard, the first two authors should be forced to write the concluding chapters between them!

Please find enclosed a little article on Black Crypt. Hints for this tough adventure are thin on the ground.

\*

The quick answer to your criticism is a) no one wrote any letters, thinking that Probe was dead, b) stuff for 16 bit computers is as thin on the ground as hints for Black Crypt and c) you didn't send in any funny poems until "it's an adventurer's life!"

I thought this was hilarious and very clever - please let us have more of the same!

In this issue (if Barbara has room) you will see another version of Part 2 of SOMA, then hopefully someone will write the next part.

As far as the three way letters are concerned, the reason for this system is that Barbara (being a busy person with a family to feed and with voluntary work for the aged taking up a lot of her time - *(plus occasional playtesting, Ed)*) needed to off-load some of the extensive work that goes into producing a magazine. For my part, I was delighted when she asked me to take on the job and become part of the production team. This way, too, the editor gets a variation in viewpoint in part of the magazine.

I was very pleased to see your letter, Mary - this is just the sort of feed-back the editor is looking for. (June)



From Martin Bela, of Alvaston ...

As my situation has taken a downward turn and money is a bit scarce now, I decided to save some money by not renewing any of my subscriptions. Then I started rereading some Probes from last year and I actually began to miss some of the regular adventurers (even the Gruel!). I've decided that I can't do without Probe any longer, so here is my subscription.

Now for something completely different. I noticed the other day how little home-brew educational software there is available. "Is it too difficult to write?" I thought. "Are any utilities available for writing it with?"

Then I had this brilliant idea. An Adventure Creator could be used! Each 'location' could be a page of text; a lesson/question. Each question could be in the form of a multiple choice, with a correct answer taking you to the next 'location' and a wrong answer taking you back to the previous page to re-learn that part. A wrong answer may also take you along a different route to more fully explain the lesson. These selections could be in place of the usual N.S.E.W. directions. Some answers would have to be typed in (adventure style) with good use being made of the parser, although an essay is probably too much!

Good idea, eh? ... Oh, well, just a thought.

\*

Definitely a good idea, Martin. The 'Fun School' programs by Database Educational Software and 'Punctuation Pete' by Five Ways Software (both for Spectrum) are the only ones I have heard of, although I believe there are some for the BBC. Still, I would imagine there's room for a few home-grown ones. Mind you, I've always held that adventures themselves are educational anyway, in that they teach the use of imagination, logic and lateral thinking! (June)

\* \* \* \*

From Tim Kemp, of Norwich ...

Just received the latest Adventure Probe (Issue 77?) and can sympathize with your plea in the editorial for letters! They are hard to come by aren't they? That's why I turn the letters that are sent to FB into question and answer type affairs, i.e. I'll make my answers to the letters as detailed as possible which in turn helps to fill the letters pages out a bit.

While I'm here (and to help further fill your pages) I was in the process of reaching for my pen as soon as I saw last issue's COCKROACH CDRNER (Soapbox, page 21, September issue).

As I was personally attacked in that column, I thought I'd vent my anger by writing some vitriolic rubbish in reply ... something along the lines of: Well at least I'm doing my bit to keep the adventure scene going etc. etc. However, I decided not to write anything in reply simply because I feel that anything along such lines i.e. a 'getting it off your chest' page is asking for trouble. I'm sure I could get a lot off my chest, and so could many others who were slagged off (albeit playfully) in Cockroach's column, but it expends too much precious energy and hurts one's head into the bargain!



With Tim's permission, this letter has been shortened so as not to prolong the aggro caused by Cockroach's column, which evidently annoyed several readers. Given that the column DID engender a positive response, which possibly it was meant to do, I would hope that the wished-for positive response could also be encouraged by something which did not insult people who are doing their best to keep the adventure scene alive. After all, if Zenobi, The Guild, Adventure Workshop, From Beyond and all the authors and converters decided to emigrate, adventurers would be left in a sorry state! (June)

\*\*\*\*\*

From Chris Wiggins, of Dagenham . . .

First of all congratulations to Barbara for taking over the editorship of Probe. I think it would have been a tragedy for such an excellent publication to disappear as so much hard work obviously goes into producing it each month. Although there has been a price increase of 33% I still believe it to be good value. When I first started subscribing (a couple of years back) it was £1.50 per issue so allowing for inflation I would have expected a price increase anyway.

On the subject of reviews I think it would be helpful to readers if some sort of rating system was used, covering such points as degree of difficulty, playability, etc. From Beyond has successfully used a rating system for some time now and speaking personally I find it most useful when deciding what to spend my money on.

I would also like to suggest that the contents page of Probe shows a list of adventures reviewed that particular month, giving the page the review appears on, together with the computer the adventure is for. Overall, though, I think the format of Probe is about right, with something of interest to most readers every month. To quote the old saying, "You can't please all of the people all of the time."

I personally buy Probe for the content on Spectrum adventures and I hope the magazine continues to support this machine. With the likes of Zenobi, Compass and others producing adventures from £1.99 I see no reason why the Spectrum should fade into oblivion just yet.

To change the subject - as well as being an adventure game fan I also enjoy solving logic problems of the type found in monthly magazines such as 'Logical Challenge'. Anyway, I thought I'd have a go at composing one myself (with an adventure related theme of course) and I have enclosed my effort with a step by step solution. (No peeking, June!)

Hopefully you will publish it in a future issue of Probe and maybe even offer a prize for the first correct solution opened at random?

Good luck for the continued success of Probe.

P.S. If readers like the puzzle I may be persuaded to do another one!

\*

Over to you Barbara, with the suggestions about the contents page - do you have room to do as Chris suggests. Your department, too, concerning the ratings system idea. Thanks for the puzzle, Chris - it is much more difficult than the one I sent to Barbara a couple of weeks ago. If she uses both, it will be interesting to see which one readers like best! (June)

An excellent suggestion concerning the contents page and I will implement it from this issue onwards. From Beyond has 3 'resident' reviewers and regular readers of F.B. know which reviewer has the same taste in adventures as themselves. It has always been the policy, up to now, for anybody who subscribes to Probe to feel free to submit reviews of adventures they have played. Many years ago Sandra Sharkey experimented with a scoring system, but it soon died a natural death. However, it may be time for a change, and I will include the suggestion in a future questionnaire. Your puzzle will be in the January issue. . . . (Ed)

\* \* \* \*

From Jonathan Scott, of Londonderry . . .

Having read the September issue of Probe from cover to cover and enjoyed it thoroughly, I must congratulate everyone involved. Loved the seven pages of reviews and the continuing exploits of Grimwold, but I was mighty surprised at how one insect, namely 'Cockroach', could hit out at so many members of the adventure industry in one page! Balrog, Delbert, Tony Collins, Philip Reynolds, Tim Kemp and numerous others all got a 'touch' from Cockroach's 660 or so words. Unlike me, Cockroach certainly doesn't waffle on! There are certainly a lot of questions that need answering (looking at his second paragraph!). I don't think I'll be the only one who'll want to tread on Cockroach if he attends the next Adventurers' Convention. The "numerous others" happen to be the adventure writers and converters . . . the ones who are writing sequels rifle Cockroach indeed, but what about the ones who are CONVERTING SEQUELS? Agh! Cockroach! Don't infest my kitchen or I'll . . . I'll . . . scream!

As a "converter" - not a Mormon who goes around people's doors converting them (not an easy task . . . a door's a door) - I must dispute Cockroach's "Not a conversion in sight" mentality. Tony Collins' catalogue is full of 'em and quite rightly, too. Converting other people's games is rewarding, takes less time than writing them from scratch (i.e. when from PAW on one machine to another) and usually the original version has been play-tested to remove all gameplay flaws. No more "How do I leave a clue so the player knows she has to MARRY MAGICIAN?"

Re Cockroach's remark that Balrog (or whoever) will despatch threats of legal action, Cockroach should note that J.W. and all other adventure moguls who have received a slagging have better things to do than sue a beetle-like insect who . . . Not again!

That was a big sentence!

Hones' y'know! I didn't mean t' swipe yer hubcaps - I'd ne'er dream o' lettin' yer Porsche ha'e a col' head!!!

If the Cockroach isn't careful, someone might just call out the Pest Exterminator!

\*

Oooer! If I were a Cockroach, I'd be shaking in my tiny boots! (June).





## REVIEWS

### THE LEGEND OF KYRANDIA

Reviewed by **The Grue!** on a PC



Deep within the ancient forests, the world of Kyrandia has long been known as the most magical of ancient kingdoms. The people of Kyrandia and the natural world were made partners in a plan of mutual care and protection. In return the land gave the people the Kyragem, as a symbol of this alliance.

It was the responsibility of the royal family to ensure the safety of the Kyragem and its magic powers. Years passed and abuse of the magical powers became common and the magic was being used daily, as a result the queen created the Order of Royal Mystics to prevent this. The years went by until Malcom, a friend of the royal family and Jester to the court murdered both king and queen and seized the Kyragem. Kallak, leader of the Mystics was fortunately able to create a spell that prevented Malcom leaving the castle. He then left the castle with Brandon, his grandson and heir to the throne. He raised Brandon in a rural area far away from the castle and Malcom; now Brandon has reached manhood and would you believe it?... Malcom has escaped!!!!

You play the part of Brandon and it's up to you to thwart his wicked plans and regain the Kyragem, simple really!

The first impression of the game visually apart from nice graphics, is how similar it looks to a Lucasfilm game, but unfortunately it doesn't quite play as well. The player is led into the game quite nicely, with nothing too difficult about it, but once you've managed, with a little help from Herman to repair the bridge and move into the second part, things toughen up a little.

It's also in the second part that some of the flaws in the game start to appear. For instance, Oarm tells you that you need to collect birthstones and place them in the correct order in a certain place. The only hint Oarm gives you is that the first is summer - well let me tell you that the first stone that you need to put in is not a birthstone at all! Although the remaining gems are birthstones, the game gives no clue as to how you work the order out, and apart from the sunstone which is always the first, the rest are random each time you play.

Once you've sorted out the birthstones and completed a few simple puzzles, you find yourself in THE GROTTO!

The grotto is an underground labyrinth of dark passages, luckily there are light sources around but unluckily each light source lasts for only three moves. You might then have a choice of three or four exits, in one of them you will find a new light source, but if you choose wrongly and move into a dark location... instant death! The problem is the maze is so big. It soon becomes very boring being killed on such a regular basis. To enhance your frustration even further, the save and restore is painfully slow. In fact the whole game is slow even on a half decent PC.

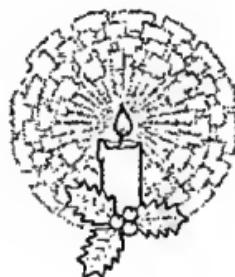
I bet you're wondering if there is anything I like about the game? Well the graphics are nice and the sound on the PC, although not brilliant is much better than the sound on the Amiga.

Eventually I managed to find my way out of the grotto, solve a couple of easy puzzles only to be confronted by the dreaded mixing of the potions part. Here you are really dropped in at the deep end and more flaws appear. I don't mind a tough puzzle if the solution is logical or if the player is given a hint or clue within the game but here the player is given no clue as to how or what he should use to mix the potions. So by trial and error I worked out how to mix potions, red flower followed by a red gem makes a red potion, blueberries followed by a blue gem makes a blue potion, but would you believe a yellow flower followed by a green gem makes a yellow potion!!

All the time I was becoming frustrated with the slowness of the save and restore, the fact that you can only carry 10-11 objects, the fact that you can't bypass the scene that you've seen before after a restore. Also you can have more than five saves but it only displays five - if one of your saved positions is not in the file window you can click on the up/down arrows to bring it into view. The trouble is that if you click on one of the arrows, it takes ages for it to come into view. So to speed up the save/restore you are in effect limited to about five saves and you end up overwriting each one just to keep yourself from falling asleep before you get around the playing the game.

It is a real pity that all the niggly bits overshadowed what could have been quite a nice game. The graphics/animation/sound were all very nice, the plot was nothing special but the system in my opinion needs a bit of tweaking. OH! one other thing that did annoy me was Malcom, if you are going to have a villain in a game, do you have to call him MALCOM?!

Minimum requirements for PC: 286 or better, 16 Mhz or better, Hard Disk, High Density drive, CGA graphics, Minimum memory 640K, Free RAM required 570K.



## CORYA, THE WARRIOR-SAGE : DRAGON

Written by **Tony Collins**

Reviewed by **Barbara Gibb** on a C64

(This is the Commodore version, the Spectrum version was reviewed in January and the Amstrad version in September.)

You play Corya, a priest about to take the final test. You are wandering around the countryside of Tannen, and your presence has reached the villagers of Ermahal. A dragon has attacked them and nearly destroyed the village. As you approach the ruins the villagers are holding a prayer meeting in the partially destroyed great hall. They ask you to help them by killing the dragon, so you set out on the long journey to find it.

The puzzles range from simple to moderate. Exits are not often stated so you have to find most of them for yourself. The text is very descriptive. In fact you often get pages of it, which must take up a great proportion of the memory; this is how the storyline is advanced at a fair pace after you have solved half a dozen or so puzzles. I couldn't help feeling that the bits that were missed out may have been very interesting.

The storyline pulls the player along with it, so you find yourself immersed in the game, pausing only long enough for you to note the password, for the one drawback is the fact that this version is in three parts, which isn't too bad if you have a disc drive but a grave disadvantage if you only have a cassette player.

Corya is an excellent adventure for beginners, and also the more experienced who wish to play an adventure that may not take weeks to finish.

Available from The Guild, 760 Tyburn Road, Erdington, Birmingham B24 9NX £2.50 tape or disc. (Cheques/p.o. payable to Glenda Collins)

Spectrum version (2 parts) £2.50 tape £4.50 disc from above address.

Amstrad version £5 on disc only, from Adventure Workshop - for address please see advert elsewhere in the magazine.



## THE DARK TOWER

written by **Jack Lockerby**

reviewed by **Barbara Gibb** on a C64

Maintaining his policy of adapting his adventures to other formats, Jack Lockerby's latest is *The Dark Tower*.

In this adventure you are a brave novice monk chosen by the Abbot to enter The Dark Tower and recover the items stolen from the monastery by marauding Orcs.

Your journey starts near a cottage. The owner is very reluctant to open the door. Access is your first main problem, and success should see you half ready to explore further afield. After overcoming a few obstacles such as a giant ladybird and a troll you reach the multi-level citadel of the title.

I suggest you explore and map out each level separately as you travel upwards from cellar to roof, as a certain amount of toing and froing is involved before you have recovered the stolen items. You will encounter some opposition in the form of a guard and his dogs, and groups of Orcs keep cropping up just when you thought you were getting along fine. Overcome them and you may get closer to the various treasures but not necessarily take them without further problem solving.

When you have collected all the stolen treasures, dash back to the forest where an act of kindness will see you safely home.

This is a faithful conversion using the Quill, with the storyline and 99.9% of the puzzles in tact. The only minor, and not at all inconvenient, difference being that you have restrictive use of the bag. I won't go into details as that would spoil the fun.

I have played the adventure on three different computers and I've never been bored by it. In fact I thought I was so familiar I became overconfident and forgot to find a certain object which I didn't miss until I needed it much later in the game.

A beautifully crafted traditional text-adventure suitable for adventurers of any level of expertise.

Available from J. A. Lockerby, 44 Hyde Place, Aylesham, Canterbury, Kent, CT3 3AL

£2.50 on tape or disc. Cheques/p.o. payable to J. A. Lockerby.

Spectrum version (reviewed March 1992) available from Zenobi Software

£2.49 on tape £3.49 on +3 disc.

Atari version available as Licenceware (see advert.)



## THE GOLDEN LOCKET

written by **Keith Burnard**

reviewed by **Barbara Gibb** on a Spectrum

Sitting in your favourite chair watching a late Western on the telly, you hear someone say "PUT YOUR HANDS UP". Much to your surprise you notice that you are wearing cowboy gear and that three masked men are standing in front of you, holding guns. They search you and take the locket that you had bought for your wife's birthday.

The first man keeps the locket, the second, the chain and the third man, the photo! Laughing to themselves, they ride off. You decide to follow them and get your belongings back.

I know the Western storyline has been used before, but in my opinion this is the best. The sense of urgency is there right from the start as you are being chased by a bear; dealing with him could take a few attempts.

During the chase after the Walton Brothers (the three masked men who stole the golden locket of the title) I was amazed to count a total of 48 locations covering as varied a landscape as the storyline permitted. These ranged from rocky terrain, open plain, desert, an Indian settlement, a ghost town, somewhere called Tinas City with a very mean sheriff, and another centre of "civilization" called Miss City with a real wild-west saloon, and my favourite, Walton Mountain. In addition to the Waltons there is also a good selection of characters that you meet along the trail and most have to be dealt with.

Puzzles are logical and never dull. You may get a few nasty surprises if you don't heed the warnings, but I'm not going to tell you what they are.

Written using Tom Frost's ABS utility (The Adventure Builder System) and a good working knowledge of Basic, the screen display is clear and the responses are quick. A complete set of instructions loads in before the adventure and I suggest you read them at least once.

Keith showed promise with Radiomania, and I think The Golden Locket is better. By the time he finishes his third adventure he should be in the same league as Jack Lockerby.

Available from: Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, OL12 7NX

£2.49 on tape. (Cheques/p.o. payable to Zenobi Software)



## SOAPBOX

### THE CASE OF THE C\*\*\*\*\*-UP CONTRACT!

#### - A WARNING

written by an extremely ANGRY Adventure Writer

Way, way back about a yaar or so,  
Was the start of my tale of woe,  
A writer of games this be my creed,  
And a programmer and publisher I did need.

A meeting of heads and a deal was made,  
My game and another would share the same tape,  
Agreements as such should be built around trust,  
Little did I know mine would crumble to dust!

Where is my quarterly information or cheque,  
None hava I received tho' it's written in red,  
For nigh on a year I've had reason to frat,  
Because that publisher his word has not kept.

Each time I've rang it's always the same,  
"The cheques' in the post", an excuse, oh so lame,  
And I wait many weeks twiddling my thumbs,  
But - of course no cheque ever comes . . .

The last news I've had on my game,  
Was through a section of Advantura Probe fame.  
I was shockad and riled, my anger had risen,  
How dare ha do this WITHOUT my permission.

TONY COLLINS I write out your name,  
I've not given you permission to convert my game,  
That guy from whom you secured the rights so fine,  
See the git 'cos those rights are mine!!

As for YOU Mr Games Publishing man,  
You'll have no more games written by me for your 'scam',  
It's too late now for your reaction,  
'Cos against you I'm considering - taking some action!!!

*(This was sent in anonymously, but I am assured it is written by a subscriber - otherwise I wouldn't have considered publishing it. The SOAPBOX page is open to ALL subscribers and is available should anyone wish me to publish a reply. I'm not sure who told me about the Commodore conversions. \_\_\_\_\_ Ed)*

#### **GRINWOLD'S FAVOURITE 5 ADVENTURES**

1. Bounty Hunter - River
2. Test - Ken Bond
3. Treasure Island - River
4. Corya: Warrior-Sage - A Collins
5. Microfar Madness - Delbert the Hamstar

#### **GRINWOLD'S MOST HATED 5 ADVENTURES**

1. Any Charles Sharp 'adventure'
2. Any Edmund Spicer 'adventure'
3. Dark Sky Over Paradise - Interactive Technology
4. 12 Lost Souls - Len Townsend
5. Island of Chaos - Tony Kingsmill

*(Grinwold submitted the lists with no explanation for his likes and dislikes. Have you got a list or lists? If so, please send it/them in and I will be happy to publish - reasons (if printable) will be appreciated \_\_\_\_\_ Ed)*

## COCKROACH CORNER

The latest batch of letters was a "mixed-bunch" to say the very least but one letter did catch my eye and for a moment or two I thought I actually had a cause to champion. It came from a programmer - one of those people responsible for writing the games that you and I seem so willing to squander our money on - though to be honest the letter would have carried more weight if the writer had chosen to reveal his/her identity, rather than to hide behind the cloak of anonymity. If what you say is the truth then why withhold your true name, or is that asking too much of today's people? (Huh! Ed)

The letter went on to inform me of the insidious manner in which they had been treated by somebody they insisted on referring to as "Mr.X" - some detective work of my own, of which I am more than capable of doing, revealed the correct initial more likely to be one that falls between the letters "G" and "I" but this is purely incidental to the matter in hand - and about the way in which "Mr.X" manipulated events to suit his own purposes. It seems that a contract was drawn up and signed prior to our "Mr.X" doing the necessary with the original database - it having been agreed that he should be the one responsible for actually producing the finished game - but that this agreement was not worth the paper it was printed on. The programmer detailed a list of various points that either "Mr.X" failed to comply with or simply chose to ignore, not the least being a reluctance on his part to come up with any hard cash in lieu of sales of the finished game. A game which incidentally the programmer insists was tampered with in such a way as to allow nice "Mr.X" the opportunity to take a "sly dig" at the head of another software house and somebody who it is well known that he has scant regard for. This, coupled with the fact that "Mr.X" had a great reluctance to abide with the conditions of the agreement and to pay his dues in regards to sales of the game and royalties due, led the programmer to confront "Mr.X", in public, and demand he cough up the readies. Some time later a payment to cover the first 100 copies of the game was sent to the programmer and for a moment it seemed that all was sweetness and light. However since then there has been no further payments and no further contact.

Now when I first read this letter my eyes lit up and I thought to myself - "Great, some good stuff to get my teeth into!", and then I continued to read of the various promises (all broken of course!) of "Mr.X" I really thought that here was a man worthy of my wrath and a damn good tongue-lashing. After all, anybody who continually resorts to those tried and tested old chestnuts such as "The cheque is in the post" and "It must have gone missing in the post" deserved everything I could throw at him.

However, the simple fact that our "Mr.X" had actually paid up for 100 copies of the game kind of knocked the wind out of my sails. Considering that the game was a "128K Only" game (Spectrum) and considering the present state of the market, I honestly think that our programmer was "Paid-Off". In the nicest possible way. In order that "Mr.X" could preserve some peace of mind. To be quite honest, I highly doubt if anything approaching 100 copies of the game have ever been sold and that our programmer should think themselves lucky to have received what they did.

Okay, "Mr.X" did not conduct himself in a manner befitting a person of his standing but he did at least have the bottle to pay for his peace of mind. So if "Mr.X" is reading this then prove me wrong by informing me and the rest of the world just how many copies of the game he did sell and if he has sold more than 100 copies, then let him get his cheque book and write a cheque for the amount he owes the programmer. A word of warning to him - the programmer state that according to a conversation they had with him, his "organisation" did not conform to everyday standards and he was quite proud of the fact that he did not declare either his income from the running of this company nor did he pay any dues to the taxman as a result of the monies he earned from the sales of games produced by this company. Well, if this is true, then let me just say that some irate person might just use this knowledge to gain themselves some "brownie-points" with the members of their local tax office. Nudge! nudge! know what I mean?

That old bag-of-wind from the county whose only purpose in life is to prevent Yorkshire slipping into the Irish Sea (Lancashire), wrote to me again - I must be costing him a fortune in stamps - and complained that the "blank" tape on the other side of "one-part" games was in fact a waste of space but could be used for saving your game positions on. All wise and good, but only of any use if you can get the flaming game to load in the first place, fatso. So cease the pathetic excuses and start putting something on the other side of the tape before I pull the plug on that pathetic little county of yours and let it sink beneath the murky waters of the Irish Sea.

I know I asked the question "Who needs another version of ARNOLD THE ADVENTURER?" but there was no need for Scott Denyer to go to the extremes that he did. It now seems that Scott has decided to wrap up the affairs of DTHS and concentrate on greater things. His excuse was that he could not spare the time but if you ask me I think it was more a case of "NO SALE" rather than "NO TIME". Was nice knowing you Scott but next time you come out to play just make sure you stay in the right league.

*(Wouldn't it be nice if everyone got on well with everyone else! No aggo, no hassle, just helpfulness all the way. I wonder if you can guess what my New Year wish will be? I can appreciate Scott's position as I have seen the amount of project work students are expected to produce in their last two years at school. He assures me he will continue to write adventures. Hooray, I am delighted as I for one love the Arnold series..... Ed)*

For those wishing to write to Cockroach, the address is:-

The Old Ing  
72A Halifax Road  
Triangle  
Sowerby Bridge  
HX6 3HW





## THE MIGHTY ATOM - Part 4

by Geoff Lynas



.... I invited Eric round (out of the goodness of my heart) to have a look at the Atom and replaced the handset of the phone onto the whatever-the-other-bit-of-a-phone is called. Barely had the thought (that I didn't know what the other bit was called) surfaced in my mind that a heavy, insistent pounding echoed down the hall. "Good lord, my old chum, you've wasted no time!" I said. "Brought my soldering iron," wheezed Eric brandishing what can only be described as, a soldering iron, under my nose. "you never know when you might need one," he concluded. But I knew!

Blood, toil, sweat and tears but not necessarily in that order (Winston Churchill aat your heart out) were evident in great portions but the Lego and the typewriter keys all seemed to be fitting together quite nicely. Smoke gathered in a thickening layer across the ceiling and Eric's linguistic skill became more evident as he talked to the components in words I didn't recognise. "GERINN YABASSAD", he encouraged a chip he was having a little difficulty fitting. But eventually Eric's cajoling and persistence paid off, the job was finished.

It was a grand job, no bits left over, no component forced into unsuitable orifices, no surface scratched and no screw threaded. A truly professional job costing far less than the £15 extra Acorn charged for supplying it already built! It looked perfect, complete in every way. All we needed now was a TV to plug it into and a cassette player to load the tape from! It was Saturday evening. Eric seemed very tired so he went home on the understanding that as soon as the other bits were acquired he would return to see it all in action.

Sunday was a long day that week but at least that gave me the opportunity to read the MANUAL. It was a very good manual, I think, which took you in easy stages from the eminently satisfying PRINT "HELLO" to being able to write a short adventure game! Fascinating stuff, I was lost by page 23 ('setting up matrices'). I didn't let that put me off!

More nonsense in a minute but first the news ....

The Acorn Roadshow has been travelling the country for some months now, in an attempt to part us parochials from our hard earned cash. On the 14th November it came as close to my little town as it was going to get so I popped along to Middlesborough to see what was happening. The event was staged at a very posh hotel off a busy street which was off the main shopping precinct and if you didn't know it was there you wouldn't have known it was there! Once inside the hotel, the job of finding the suite that had been hired was almost as trying as finding the hotel. Eventually we arrived (my wife, my son and myself) and we logged in. I was a little disappointed to discover that Acorn were pretty much the only traders there. However, this disappointment evaporated as I wandered around and saw the range of material on display. Some A3010 machines had been set up with some fun arcade games for the kids to have a go at. I managed to persuade the attendant of one machine to load up my game, "The Survivor", so that I could make sure it worked on the latest kit. Thankfully, it did.

During the 2 hours that we were in attendance the place never really became over full. What an unexpected bunch those that did attend were. They seemed to fall into two categories: grand-parents and grand-children. Very few parents seemed to be there. I think the absentees were wise. One couple seemed to be having a thrilling time dealing with an early teens daughter who couldn't understand why they had come to the roadshow if they weren't going to buy a computer. Anyway, the new machines all impressed and the demonstration of the HCCS video digitizer was so convincing that my wife came away demanding that I order one immediately! Have you seen a CD-ROM device, hooked up to a decent computer, in action? It will leave your mind well and truly blown. An inspiring outing which did nothing to change my view that Archimedes machines are the best.

The down side of our visit to the roadshow was that we still had time to kill in Middlesbrough while my wife bought some new togs. This gave my son, now converted into a glibbering computer junky, the opportunity of dragging me into Dixons for a fix. It was jumping. Every machine out was on display surrounded by potential customers and others like my son. There were Amigas, Ataris, Sega Megadrives/Game Gears etc. IBM PCs, CD Laservisions and A3010s. Chris (the boy) was lost! We prised him away from this Aladdin's cave some time later. It is three weeks since then and he still hasn't shut up!

Had the chance, by the way, of eavesdropping on a couple of Dixon's assistants giving some computer illiterate punters the benefit of their knowledge. Keep taking the courses lads!

I managed to sneak into the back of a Head Teachers' seminar at the local county computer centre this month. Being a school governor helped. What was said was of limited interest to the "Adventure Probe" reader but during the seminar an Acorn A4 laptop was brought out and put through its paces. At the roadshow I had picked up a leaflet concerning the A4 and had a read after the seminar. What struck me was that Acorn was pointing out that the speed at which the screen refreshed was too slow for arcade action-type games but was eminently suitable for playing adventure games! And it only costs £1300 plus VAT!!!

Meanwhile, back on planet Earth, another new magazine hit the stands since I last wrote: ROLE PLAYER INDEPENDENT which is full of the sort of things you might expect including software reviews by somebody called STORM. Sounds familiar. I got to keep my copy of this new magazine as yet another issue I appeared called BAD INFLUENCE which appealed to my son more. He is only 9! This magazine is a hefty £2.95 and weighs a heftier 10lbs (well it feels like it) and is the written matter to accompany the Andy Crane ITV version of Gamesmaster. Short on adventures I'm afraid. The December issue of "Acorn Computing" contained only the second text adventure review I have seen in an Acorn mainstream magazine in over a year. Fortunately, for me as the author of the game, it was very favourable. I might even sell a few as a result of it! Who knows?

Inkjet printers. If you are thinking of treating yourself to one this Christmas, shop around. I saw one advertised in "Computer Shopper" this month, a Fujitsu. Judging only by appearances, I could discern no difference between it and the Intergrex Beta Jet that I had only recently purchased. The design is quite distinctive too. The big difference was that I paid £189 plus VAT for the Intergrex and they were asking £349 for the Fujitsu!!! *(I'll ask you to do the shopping around for me when I am ready to buy a new printer—Ed)*

Finally, a bit of news for all Archie adventurers out there with the good sense to read "Probe". Philip Hawthorne (*a very nice man* Ed), the John Wilson of Archie adventuredom, has just released a new game. A rare event! It is called Cyborg. It is a combination of an arcade game with an illustrated text adventure (stay with me) the stages of the game being interlinked with greater success in the arcade bits making progress through the text bits easier. For your money (a not untypical £25.95) you get 3 highly compressed disks containing 4 megabytes of graphics, 100K of music and sound effects and a very smooth game. Good luck with sales Philip and don't forget - if I had a copy I'd review it!

Rate! I've run out of space. I hope Barbara can squeeze my competition in elsewhere. (*below actually* Ed) The prize, by the way, is a VHS copy of "Jumping Jack Flash", starring Whooper Goldberg and featuring its fair share of computers.

Merry Christmas!

## COMPETITION

In the October issue of "Adventure Probe" I began the saga of my life in computing. I mentioned searching through an Electronics catalogue to find a suitable computer kit. According to my article, listed in the catalogue was an Interossiter. I can now disclose that this claim is in fact false. There was no such item in the catalogue. However, an Interossiter has appeared in another electronics catalogue, courtesy of Hollywood! To win the highly desirable prize all you have to do is write in about 120 words and tell me what an Interossiter is.

High marks will be scored for humour rather than accuracy.

Please send your entries to: Geoff Lynas

(Interossiter Competition)

23 Coral Street

Saltburn

Cleveland

TS12 1DB

U.K.

*Closing date Monday, 15th February 1993*



## Who's who at the London and Home Counties Meetings

drawn by Martin Freemantle



# \* \* \* \* \* SynTax \* \* \* \* \*

SynTax is a bi-monthly colour disk magazine packed full of reviews, solutions, hints, features, information files and many other items of interest to 16-bit adventurers and RPGers. The first issue was in July 1989.

Versions are available for the ST (STE-compatible), Amiga (needs an external drive, not A500 plus or A600) and PC (both disk sizes). The Amiga version runs using an emulator which is provided free with your first issue.

SynTax costs £3.50 an issue or £20 for a year's subscription (£5.25/£30 outside the UK/Europe by airmail). Don't forget to say which version you require when ordering.

Cheques/POs should be made payable to  
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THE ENCHANTED COTTAGE by Jack Lockerby/Roger Betts  
INTO THE MYSTIC by Jack Lockerby  
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THE MINES OF LITHIAD by Jack Lockerby  
TREASURE ISLAND by Jack Lockerby  
THREE OF THE BEST - by Jack Lockerby/Roger Betts  
(HAMMER OF GRIMMOLD, MUTANT, & DOMES OF SHA)  
TWO FOR ONE - by Jack Lockerby /Roger Betts  
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Adventures for the Amstrad

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## SOMA

(Stories Of Many Authors!)

The idea was sent in by MerC (alas no longer a subscriber, I think) who thought it would be interesting and amusing. Readers were invited to submit their idea of how the story would continue, no one would know the course of the story nor the ending. The first one (by MerC) was published in November 1991 and the second by Jim O'Keeffe. In January 1992 I don't know why, but no further episodes appeared. It wouldn't be fair to expect Jim to write the whole story himself, but I for one would have liked to read how he envisaged the follow-up. I invite readers to submit entries for the next chapter, stating which chapter it follows. May I suggest you reread the aforementioned chapters - if enough readers request it, I will be happy to reprint SOMA 1 and 2 in a future issue.

Below is an alternative to Jim O'Keeffe's wonderful chapter.



## SOMA 2

written by A. Reuter

.... a Thermos flask. "Funny," the Traveller thought, "These haven't been invented yet!"

In this year of 1745, it would be another 97 years before James Dewar would even be born! Intrigued by its incongruous presence, the man carefully drew the flask from its half-buried situation. Holding it upright, after brushing off the dead leaves and particles of earth which clung to it, he carefully unscrewed the cup from the top.

Placing the flask on the floor, he examined the cup with intense care, from all angles. It was made from once-white plastic material, now badly marked with indefinable stains. In the bottom of the cup he could see traces of some green matter, which had hardened into unpleasant-looking blobs.

There was no mistaking the fact that it was, indeed, a Thermos flask cup - he had seen many of these, attached to their accompanying containers, during his visits to future eras, from whence he had culled many of the items of his equipment.

Having come to this conclusion, he placed the cup on the floor and picked up the flask. Making the mental observation that the stopper was tightly screwed in, he shook it gently, holding it up to his right ear.

It wouldn't have been any use holding it to his left ear, as he no longer had one after that momentous battle with the giant saw-toothed polyp, when he had barely escaped with his life.

The action of holding the flask to his ear reminded him of that encounter. He stayed still for a few seconds, savouring the memory of hearing the giant saw-toothed polyp running away in terror, screaming "MUM!" after he had brandished his ultimate weapon (a Vick Inhaler) at it.

Bringing himself back to the present with a jerk, he shook the flask again and heard a gentle lapping sound, like the noise of an incoming tide against rocks. Again he shook it, and this time, he detected a faint tapping sound, as if there was something vaguely solid inside it.

What could be in it? More of the green stuff which the cup had once held? Should he open it, or should he leave well alone? Having suffered indescribable damage to his pride and his well-being many times in the past, as a result of recklessly opening mysterious boxes, packages or containers, the man decided to give the matter some thought before taking any definite action.

Pulling a leather wine-skin from his back-sack, he sat down to drink and await a decision from his alter ego, which he always consulted before making any rash moves.

After swallowing several gulps from the skin, he felt his senses beginning to swim. Remembering that the mixture of saki and ouzo which the skin contained was reckoned to be almost as potent as the well-known futuristic gargle-blastar, he hurriedly pushed in the cork and replaced the wine-skin in his back-pack.

Feeling braver now, he thought "Why did I worry about opening the flask? What could possibly be in it that could harm me? I don't have to drink it, after all, whatever it is!"

With that thought, he picked up the flask and tried to unscrew the stopper. It was too tight - he couldn't move it!

His agile brain immediately thought of a solution to the problem. Ferreting in his back-pack, he pulled out a length of rope which, although hair thin, had a super-tensile strength that he had depended on many times to haul himself out of deep chasms into which he had unwittingly projected himself.

Twisting the rope round the stopper and securing it, he looped a short length round a convenient boulder and secured that. Then, sitting down, with his feet against the boulder to get maximum leverage, he hauled on the flask with all his might.

As the stopper whizzed round and came free, there was an enormous explosion. The flask fell from his hands as a blast of air threw him out of the cave to land on his back on the sloping hillside. As he lay there, slightly stunned, he watched in awe as the flask rolled to the mouth of the cave, then out of it, in a softly flowing motion, the gentleness of which belied its eventual appearance, slowly oozed a .....

Answers for the Word Search by Doreen Bardon in the November magazine

GIANT	FISH	GOBLINS	ANT
OGRE	DWARF	PYTHON	RAT
DRAGON	ORC	WORM	SERPENT
CAT	DEMON	WIZARD	GUARDIAN
DOG	SPHINX	WOLF	SKELETON
MOUSE	PHOENIX	VAMPIRE	ZOMBIE
WYVERN	BALROG	UNICORN	TROLL
HARPY	FAIRY	BEAR	WARG
ELEPHANT	ELF	BEES	SPIDER
SNOWMAN	HOST	ROC	GNOME



## UNOFFICIAL CONVENTION REPORT FROM THE MEGAPOINT'S CORNER

written by Sharon Harwood



The date is 23rd October 1982, the Third Annual Adventurers' Convention has begun . . . . OK! So it's one day early, but us "Essex Girls" just loooove to have fun so we start at noon on Friday and make it last 'till early evening Sunday . . . .

Pouncing on an unsuspecting Scott in that out-of-the-way Flitwick, we make terrific time until we reach the junction before our turn-off on the M6 where, 10 minutes away from the Hotel, we spend the next hour and a half waving to the people in the next car . . . well, Scott did anyway, we tried to look a little more grown up!?

Arriving at the Hotel, having taken a small detour around the next roundabout (even a bad navigator is better than none!) we find that the place is already teeming with those strange people we call 'Friends' . . . . Our first 'quest' in the Adventure-packed weekend is to find 'The Chinese' that everyone know exists but no one seems to know the name of. Five of us leave the Hotel full of expectations and direct the first taxi towards China Town. The place was absolutely jam packed with Chinese Restaurants (now that is a surprise, isn't it?!?). We immediately give up on any hope we had of seeing the others and settle ourselves to a nice 'quiet' meal before returning to the Hotel and carefully re-arranging the lounge (you'd think they'd have it ready for us, wouldn't you?).

Eventually the whole place is throbbing with talk of Adventures and Computers. Tom Frost decides that, to save waiting for the bar to open tomorrow, he'll drink Saturday morning's ration before he goes to bed . . . . saves getting up too early and sounds like a good idea to me!

Saturday morning starts with a big breakfast of one cup of coffee and a lot of stomach churning as I watch what some of the others manage to put away, then it's straight to the Hall where an eager Larry is already set-up and raring to go! A few trips in the lift see the Megapoint's corner filling up, then, putting our plan into action, we manage to set up Larry's dud game and get Lynne and Anne in position. They sit there for about half an hour before we are able to persuade Larry that it's time the Competition began and we sit back and watch his face for the next 20 minutes . . . .

The place is filling up nicely and by the time I manage to turn away from Larry I'm shocked to see how many people have arrived . . . . No Tom yet though!

People aren't putting their names down for the Competition so Scott takes the drastic measure of pouncing on the unsuspecting as they enter the Hall . . . . It seems to work but he becomes a little chicken when it's time to venture into The Grue's corner and, summoning all my courage (and gathering more! support), I put on all the charm and talk him into it (did better than Larry, didn't you Grue?).

An alarm sounds from the Megapoint's corner . . . . Bob Adams has inadvertently (I'm not convinced!) pressed the wrong key and reset the computer . . . . he can't be persuaded to carry on from where he left off (gives it all away, doesn't it?).

Lunch time comes and goes (the money leaves with it!) while we worry about the state of the scoring. We've got three people with the top score of (a fantastic) 7 and start to envisage a tie-break situation. Luckily Gareth leaps to the rescue (nearly doing himself an injury!) with a copy of DOTME (the real title would take up half the page!) which is still in its playtesting stage but will be perfect for a play-off!

Jackie Wright corners us and begins a conversation with the immortal words "If I ask you a question will you tell me the truth?". Smiling broadly (and knowing what's coming next) we agree and I stand quietly as Scott lies through his teeth and explains why Larry's game wasn't any different than anybody else's. I can stand it no more when he calmly tells her that passing the troll is simplicity itself "Just tell it to go away!" I beat a hasty retreat... giggling all the way to the loo!

Relaxing a little we prepared to shut up shop so that we can watch Bob's knees shaking... shame he didn't wear shorts though! Gathering chairs we find ourselves a prime position and watch The Grue giggle his way from one end of the Hall to the other... and back... and forward... and back... until we've all got a bad case of Tennis Neck (there is such a thing... there must be!). Then it's our turn. We've already made it quite clear that Scott will do all the talking (and take the blame!) but the game is up as soon as we're called forward and Larry knows he's been had (thanks to Martin for the 'little trophy')... I would just like to make it clear that Lynne and Anne, sitting there innocently, were really the driving force behind the whole thing!

Returning to our contestants, we allow Larry a go at the proper game before commencing the play-offs and finally managing to separate the scores and produce a winner (well done, Mark!). Then it's time to extricate Margo from the computer and begin the lengthy job of packing the gear away... Gareth and I know why Scott's games don't load properly, don't we? He unplugs the PSU before switching the computer off! Tut! Tut!

Things wind down and, determined to stay together, many of us prepare to meet in the lounge before deciding on our destination, booking a table (we're prepared... dib, dib, dib, dib, or something like that!) and organising ourselves into a convoy of taxis....

After stuffing ourselves silly (some of us, anyway!) we return to the Hotel where, fed up with the Opera group from last year, the Hotel have organised a Karaoke night... surely, that wasn't supposed to be a 'serious' band!?

Eavesdropping on The Grue's Trivial Pursuit we argue over the answers and drink ourselves into stupors before putting our watches back and trying to convince ourselves that we're not totally 'cream-crackered'... Larry doesn't succeed and falls asleep in the armchair (with his eyes half-open). At three o'clock (it's only two really!) we finally agree that if we all leave at once nobody is going to miss anything (who said that Adventuring is an ADULT hobby?)....

Sunday morning arrives and breakfast looks just as unappetizing (that must be why Grue ate so much!). Nobody calls a Photo Session... I'd invented 'transparent matchsticks' especially for the occasion and was all prepared to sell them for £50 a pair... I've still got a photo from last year!!

So it draws to a close... a steady stream of 'walking computer equipment' makes its way to the car park and the Hotel staff give a sigh of relief... 'till next year!!

Did anybody wake Tom before they left?

## EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AT THE ROYAL ANGUS

### by 'a Fly On The Wall'

In the evening of Friday the 23rd of October, of the year 1992, a mighty battle ensued in room 505 of the above lodging house. A whole group of normally sane adventurers (if that's not a contradiction) congregated to fight it out on one of the best strategy/roleplaying games available; Lords of Chaos.

Dave Adams, playing under the name "Arky", Grimwold the Dwarf (Grimwold) and an amalgamation of players (Debby Howard, Dorothy Jones and Guido) who used a name which is not suitable to print, challenged the U.K. LoC champion, The Balrog.

The no-holds barred fight lasted long into the night, with the trio's wizard dying first (Guido was the only one of the three who'd played LoC before). Next came Arky, who made a fatal error in walking barefoot across a river of lava! That left Grimwold and Balrog to battle it out. Finally, after quite a few hours, at 4 AM Saturday morning, Grimwold was surprised by a plethora of Demons and also an Invisible Balrog, who proceeded to dice the Dwarf's wizard into itty-bitty pieces.

So, with a certain amount of regret, I feel it is my duty to announce to the Adventure-playing fraternity that The Balrog remains reigning U.K. Champion with LoC.

Beware, Balgy, next year won't be so easy!

## I'M AN ADVENTURE-LOVER

written by Laurence Creighton

I'm writing this article as an adventure-lover. By reading this magazine you too must be of similar ilk; and there are several hundred of us, but alas we are becoming an endangered species, and if sales figures of games are a barometer of what's coming, I'd say bad days are ahead.

There has to be more of us out there - still in the closet - but needing the right moment to "come out". Just as WE zeroed in on the adventure aspect of computers, it is up to EACH ONE of us to recruit new folk. If one of us shows a new person what an adventure is, how it's played, it will not die on us.

It does not matter the person's age: they can be 8 to 80. Just as WE discovered it, so can they. Talk to your neighbours, let the youngsters (anyone under 90) show it to their parents (great idea if parents got to playing adventures while the kids are sleeping . . .). Fellow readers, if we DON'T do something, the scene is going to die. Only we can do something and we had better.

From where I write, (*Cape Town, South Africa...Ed.*) I must own the last Spectrum - you don't even see it being sold in the papers any more. Those of you who can, go out and introduce what an adventure is. If someone would copy and distribute it (I know this is a pipe-dream) I would write a demo of how to play an adventure. (*An idea worth looking into*  
*Ed.*)

I beg everyone to take this article seriously; the scene is dying - only we can resuscitate it. Only we can enthuse about it, let's do it - if you each find ONE new player, it's a step in the right direction. Otherwise we're doomed.

*(The following is a very interesting tale from the MCCC NEWS which is the monthly newsletter of the Melbourne Commodore Computer Club Inc. edited by Dorothy Millard. The article originally appeared in the CUG Connection NZ. Many thanks to Dorothy for passing it on. Ed.)*

### CompuSpeak

CompuSpeak can often form a yawning chasm between computer buffs and non-believers. Language is designed to communicate but sometimes we find people trying to talk to each other in similar but different languages.

Of course, sometimes glibness and a superficial understanding of CompuSpeak can be an advantage, as shown by a wily major at a U.S. Air Force base.

The command headquarters was replacing old mainframes with the latest electronics. The new system worked fine at first, but then crashed. Engineers probed the new mainframes but couldn't find the source of the problem. They restarted it and it ran fine - for a few days. Then it crashed again; they still couldn't find the bug. This expensive, exasperating, and mysterious glitch remained for months, ruining elaborate programs that had to be started all over again.

Major S., who headed computer operations, now found himself the centre of unwanted attention. His boss, the colonel, attended all the staff meetings and whenever the system crashed (which happened every few days), the colonel's superiors made him painfully aware of the inconvenience the crashes were causing. After each staff meeting, the colonel always paid a call on Major S. to be sure he appreciated the colonel's unhappiness.

Major S. told the computer operators to call him immediately the system went down. A few days later they called him and he ran to the computer room. He heard an odd oscillating hum at the end of the room and went to investigate. Looking down a row of disk drives he saw a technical sergeant buffing the floor with an electric floor polisher. The major's eyes followed the power cord across the floor to where it disappeared into the open cabinet door of one of the new disk drives, where it was plugged into one of the auxiliary power receptacles.

"How often do you buff this floor?" he asked.

"Every few days, sir," replied the sergeant.

"Do you always plug the machine in here?"

"Always have, sir."

They brought the system up and watched it crash again as the sergeant squeezed the handle on the polisher. He'd found the problem, but he still had the delicate task of telling the colonel that months of being in the hot seat and thousands of hours of lost work were due to a sergeant polishing floors! A friend of his watched in apprehension as the major left to tell his superior, and was surprised when he returned an hour later, smiling.

"Didn't you tell the colonel?" the friend asked.

"Sure."

"Wasn't he upset?"

"Nope."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him it was a buffer problem!"



## NEWS

### TV LICENCE

The Government's green paper on the running etc. of the BBC has recently been released. Geoff Lynas has written to me to point out that "one item that set the alarm bells ringing was a suggestion that alternative ways of collecting the licence fee could be brought in. The possible method that had me sweating was to levy the licence fee on EACH TV in a household rather than have the one licence cover the whole house. Apart from this leading to the demise of the portable TV industry I'm sure you'll appreciate the implications for the likes of you or I and our portable TV/monitors!! Peter Brooke, the Heritage Secretary, is supposed to be looking into alternative collection methods in the future. It would be nice if his mail-bag had one or two letters in it pointing out the dire consequences to home computer owners of this particular change. He probably isn't even aware that we exist! If you want to drop him a line send it to PETER BROOKE, HERITAGE SECRETARY, HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, LDNNDN."

### NEW SPECTRUM RELEASES FROM ZENOBI

Out now - "Murder - he said!" by Jack Lockerby (128k only), "The Beginning of the End" by Jonathan Scott (2 parts), "Project Nova" by Mark Cantrell (2 parts) all on tape £2.49 each, and disk £3.49 each. Also "Corporal Stone" by Jason Taylor and "The Golden Locket" by Keith Burnard, on tape only £2.49 from Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, DL12 7NX.

### GRUE-KNAPPEO! NOW ON THE ATARI AND PC

Neil Shipman has converted Bob Adams' adventure and I will review it in the January issue - yes! It **will** work on a **half meg** Atari. In the meantime, if you can't wait until then, it is available from Fictitious Frobshire, 1 Heath Gardens, Coalpit Heath, Bristol, BS17 2TD for the very reasonable price of £3.00 - cheques payable to Neil Shipman. The PC and Atari versions are on the same disk but when ordering please state if you only have a single-sided disk drive in your ST.

### TAOS UPDATED

Neil Shipman has written to say that the latest version of TADS (High Energy's Text Adventure Development System) now has a multiple UNDO command, almost unlimited capacity to run even the largest games on small machines and a much improved Debugger plus many more features that non-programmers like me wouldn't understand. Expanded documentation includes a much-desired "Getting Started" chapter. At present only PC and Macintosh are supported but work is going ahead on making version 2.0 available for other computers. High Energy also have a Bulletin Board System devoted to TADS. This includes forums on programming, game design and game play (with hints, reviews and discussion of TADS and other adventure games), plus TADS shareware and game libraries and a general interest utility library. Contact High Energy Software in the USA by one of the following methods: by BBS [call (415)493-2420 setting modem to N-8-1], by CompuServe (user ID 73737,417, GENIE (mail ID M.ROBERTS10) or Internet (73737.417@compuserve.com), or write to PD Box 50422, Palo Alto, CA 94303, USA.

### **S.O.G. (Spectrum Owners Guild)**

Due to poor health and a broken agreement by the printers, Richard Pascoe has had to abandon the magazine, and refunds will be sent out. However, should the already-prepared first issue be printed, it will be sent free of charge to anyone who has subscribed. Richard sends his apologies to everyone. There is some good news though, as he still intends to operate the Secondhand Spectrum Software service (cassettes only). He has sent me a list of adventures available at the time of writing, with prices ranging from £1 to £2 for most adventures, the compilations and boxed adventures being £2.50 to £3, all plus postage. Write for a list, don't forget an SAE, to 127 Brampton Road, Newton Farm, Hereford, HR2 7DJ.

### **ATARI RELEASES FROM TOPOLOGIKA?**

I've just received a leaflet from Topologika that lists their adventures as being in preparation for the Atari. This is wonderful news as I feared they had abandoned this computer. I have written to Brian Kerslake to ask if he can give me more detail, which I will pass on to you as soon as possible.

### **IN-TOUCH**

Atari ST Software for Sale : STAC £8, Pawn £3, Jinxter £3, Blackscar Mountain £2, The Blag £2, The Adventurer £2.00

PC Software/Hardware: Are We There Yet? (3.5") and Puzzle Gallery (3.5") £12 each or both for £20. Fancy Mouse - PC/Microsoft 3 button variable resolution £15. Contact Nell Shipman, 1 Heath Gardens, Coalpit Heath, Bristol BS17 2TQ (Te. 0454-773169).

### **HELP WANTED**

Robert Cleminson has written and asked me to publish his thanks for all the help the readers have given him concerning Ghost Town. However, all the help confirmed his own findings and he is still stuck! I am wondering if the Dragon 32 version could be bugged. Has anyone played this version to a completion? If so, please let me know, urgently. Thank you.....Ed.

### **PD SOFTWARE FOR THE AMIGA A600 from Steve Clay**

Castle of Doom: Text/Graphics. The readme file on this disc is a list of excuses by the author and graphics artist. The game, apparently, is to show off the writing system, however you are then told that this game is not up to the standard you should expect from future releases and of course the graphics haven't been honed to perfection. I have spoken to three people who have played this and nobody has had a decent word for it. I've got one but Barbara wouldn't print it. (*A row of stars doesn't have quite the same impact.....Ed.*) Avoid.

Adsys: I bought this one as an adventure creator. It comes with two games also, Colossal Caves and World. The second game is the better of the two in my opinion while the first is a straight caves rendition. By the way, the ADVSYS part of the disc is nothing of the sort as you require a separate compiler and from what I can make out a text-editor also. Games are okay, system useless.

## GETTING YOU STARTED THE STAR PORTAL

played by Barbara Gibb on an Atari



You start in the Martian desert, looking for the (rumoured) secret installation and the ancient artifact within - a random selective portal to the stars. You are trudging towards (you hope) the artifact. (Inventory) - a blue envirosuit and a compact ATD. EX SUIT and EX ATD before going W to where you can see a faint spot that could be the place you seek, but don't go there yet, instead go S and S to where the sand is piled in a drift. EX RAGGEDY SUIT (not in good condition), OPEN RAGGEDY SUIT and LOOK to see a key, human skeleton and contact lens. TAKE KEY, EX KEY, TAKE LENS, EX LENS, now return N and N before going W and W to outside a building with a small blue hole in the door. EX HOLE (for the key you have just found so) PUT KEY INTO HOLE and PUSH KEY. You are now inside the building, and the door is shut with the key on the outside. The environment seems safe, so you have automatically removed your envirosuit and ATD. As you are going to travel to unknown places you had better TAKE SUIT, WEAR SUIT, TAKE ATD and WEAR ATD before going S and W to the living area. EX DESK (may have storage area so) OPEN DESK, LOOK and TAKE FLASHLIGHT, TAKE BLASTER. Return E then go S and S to the south end of the large room. Here you see a cubicle, so go S into it. You are now inside the portal. SAVE your position (if you can get it to work properly, which is more than I can), then PUSH LEVER. You should be somewhere else, and OK if you remembered to wear the envirosuit and ATD.

## ESCAPE FROM MARS

played by Richard Batey on a PC

You start in the control room of your ship. LOOK POCKETS (you find a harmonica and lighter), DROP HARMONICA, GET HARMONICA, O (you are now in the engine room), GET NET, PLAY HARMONICA (you hear rustling), PLAY HARMONICA (you hear footsteps), PLAY HARMONICA (a martian walks into the room), GET MARTIAN (in what?) NET (you have now caught the martian). It is best to capture him as soon as possible because he likes to move items around in the game. He drops his helmet. OPEN LOCKER, GET OXYGEN TANK (you can now safely leave the ship and you can tell how much oxygen you have left by taking and looking at the timepiece).

## THE VIOLATOR OF VOODOO

played by Alf Baldwin on a Spectrum

I (robe, boots, knife), NE, E, X BOAT, X MAST, GET SCROLL, X SCROLL, CUT SEAWEED, GET BLADDER, NE, X SAND, GET RING, X RING, WEAR RING, SW, W, U, U, SW, X BOULDER, CUT ROPE, NE, O, D, SW, W, X CORPSE, GET SEEDS, X SEEDS, E, NE, U, U, NW, NW, NW, W, W, W, SW, SW, W, SAY "HELLO"

## ANGELICUS ANSWER

played by Lorna Paterson on an Amstrad

You start in a Spaceship. UNFASTEN STRAP, EXAMINE COMPARTMENTS, READ WRITING, PUSH UP, GET SCREWDRIVER, PULL DOWN (pistol is red herring), PUSH IN, GET GASMASK, PULL OUT, GET JEWEL, OPEN DOOR, N, (Oz appears) \_\_\_\_\_

## GERBIL RIOT OF '67

played by Lorna Paterson on an Amstrad

You start in the Treatment Room. EXAMINE BODY, GET SYRINGE, S, E, N, GET PICTURE, S, E, N, EXAMINE JOHNSON, PUSH WALL, N, GET KEY, GET INK, S, S, E, N, OPEN FRIDGE, GET GARLIC, GET TOP, N, GET BLANKET, S, S, W, W, W, N, UNLOCK CUPBOARD, LOIN CUPBOARD, GET strip of COPPER \_\_\_\_\_

## THE MINES OF LITHIAD

played by Alf Baldwin on a Spectrum

WAIT (Cavilan arrives and flies you to Kalam Wood), W, W, W, W, S, S, S, S, E, E, E, E, S, S, W, W, W, S, E, E, E, ENTER, X BED, GET LANTERN, LOOK UNDER BED, GET JUG, LEAVE, W, W, W, N, E, E, E, E, N, N, W, W, W, W, N, N, E, E, ENTER, X WELL, TURN HANDLE, X BUCKET, PUT JUG IN BUCKET, TURN HANDLE, TURN HANDLE, GET JUG (full of water), LEAVE, W, W, S, E, E, E, E, E, X MAN (dying of thirst), GIVE WATER (he gives you a glass phial), E, E, S, W, W, W, W, S, X RIVER, WAIT, GET SPADE, S, W, W, W, W, DIG, GET FLINT \_\_\_\_\_

## DRAGON SLAYER (128K)

played by Barbara Gibb on a Spectrum

You start on a dusty track. Go E and SEARCH GRASS then TAKE SPADE, continue E, E, and EXAMINE TREE, READ NOTICE and CLIMB OAK tree. EXAMINE BRANCH and REACH IN HOLE (to find a hook). Go D and now CLIMB ELM tree, SEARCH LEAVES and EXAMINE NEST, TAKE TOP and EXAMINE TOP, D, W, RAKE LEAVES (need hook from the hole), TAKE ROPE and TIE ROPE TO HOOK. Now go E and S to where there is a Goblin preventing you from crossing the rope-bridge. SWING ROPE (with hook attached - you knock him unconscious). TAKE SWORD and go N, W, W, W, W, and THROW HOOK so that you can CLIMB ROPE to the ledge \_\_\_\_\_

## CURSED BE THE CITY

played by Barbara Gibb on a C64

You start strapped on a rack. When you SCREAM a stranger enters and rescues you. TAKE CHALICE and TAKE WINE, then EXAMINE TORTURER and TAKE KNIFE from his chest before going U the stairs and E into the garden. CLIMB TREE and go N along the branch, then D into the straat. Go W and W into a temple, and N to beside an altar where the high priest Rasantal is lying on the floor. When he sees you he asks for a drink so GIVE WINE. Rasantal requests you to help him further and you must LIE ON ALTAR. He pulls some hidden controls and you are surrounded by flames and find yourself falling \_\_\_\_\_

## HINTS AND TIPS

### SNOW JOKE

played by **Barbara Gibb** on a Spectrum

Freeze to death - check the passenger seat.

Can't use the matches - simply carry them when you LIGHT BLOWTORCH.

Can't defrost the keys - you need a cup of boiling water (melted ice).



### PRISON BLUES

played by **Simon Poxon** on an Amstrad

You need to make a balloon to get over the wall in the exercise yard - bin liner, string and gas canister.

To get over the river at the end you need a rope (made from straw) to tie to the tree branch then you can swing across.

### MICROFAIR MADNESS (128K)

played by **Bernard Wood** on a Spectrum

Level 1 - Use curtains to catch frog.

Light and drop curtains to get calculator.

Dip dart in poison before throwing at Mistress.

The Hoppit - to escape, wear tights, throw tight then climb tights.

The Great Caravan Caper - Remove old clothes before wearing good clothes, then put old clothes back on.

Level 2 - Drop dead budgie, climb on robocleaner, jump off in rubbish dump. After opening the box go straight to chasm to catch lemming.

### MORDONS QUEST

played by **Angela Allum** on an Amstrad

Climb the drain pipe, then go back into the house and meet someone. The torch will help you with the mist, the blanket with the quicksand.

Someone at sea needs the newspaper.

Leave the pearl till the aqualung is FULL.



## THE DOGBOY - Part 2

played by **Jonathan Scott** on a Spectrum

The password is DESTINY.

Take a handful of blueness, redness and whiteness from the appropriate locations at the start. Drop each of these in a location with a different colour, now collect another three handfuls of said colours and drop each in a location so that all three locations are red, white and blue.

Listen to the mouse's voice when you need help (as long as you have freed him).

Examine the rack in the train carriage and take the case you find there.

Dig at the cave with the heart for a diamond.

At the crystal cavern, examine the track to notice several coloured levers. Pull each one in turn. Wait for the train to arrive after each. Once it has arrived after pulling the last lever, pull the pink one and enter the carriage. This is how you get through the fire falls.

## MAROONED

played by **Alf Baldwin** on a Spectrum

Examine the sea at the start then wait for the dolphin to arrive and hitch a lift.

Use the ladder to reach the dangling rope.

Pray whilst carrying the prayer book from under the pew.

Talk to man under tree before he dies - what he says is very important, and his clothes will act as a disguise.

Move the mower in the shed.

Talk to the men and enlist their help in moving the (chopped down) tree and the boulder. Don't pay them too soon.

Prise the boards in the boarded-up shop. Search inside the shop twice.

Don't be in too much of a hurry to set light to the branch.

## JHOTHAMIA 6

played by **Barbara Gibb** on a C64

Examine the door in the start location to find a map - needed when you leave the spaceship.

PRESS 4 to open the safe.

Make a paint brush - need hair, stick and glue.

Wear the anti-radiation suit to go N from the central cabin.

Paint the door in the corridor. Remove the cover on the light, remove the bulb (now an empty socket), you can now charge laser.

Paint the loose door and then weld it between the cabin and the airlock.

## CASTLE OF TERROR - Part 2

played by **Barbara Gibb** on a C64

Knight prevents you from moving W from the library - press the skull and take a book to reveal a secret exit.

Stuck in the secret treasure chamber - strike the flint to light the candle, then put the book on the shelf.

Throw the rope to ensnare the spears of the Knights.

Spider bites you - swing the club.

Killed by Dracula - carry the cross.

Cut rope blinding girl - the sharp knife doesn't work, you need the dagger from the dead adventurer.

Can't escape the dungeon - pour the ale from the tankard onto the fire to cool the pot so that you can move it to reveal a hidden exit.

## NIGHTMARE 1

played by **Barbara Gibb** on a C64

Spray the spider then move spider to find a coin.

Wear bloo tack to escape through the cat flap.

Climb the fence at the end of the garden so that something is thrown at you.

Climb bush to find a crowbar.

Go desert - but you must have a map.

Go tower, but must eat the vitamins first.

Having trouble with the nurse in the Health Spa - drop the cheese.

Cut truck (need oxy-acetylene kit and mask) then Go hole.



## CHRISTMAS WEEK

written by Barbara Bassingthwaighe

### OBJECTS

### USES

Knife	.....	Carve turkey with it.
Lamp	.....	Wrap it up for a present.
Rope	.....	Tie up intruder (Santa).
Sack	.....	Fill it with toys.
Matches	.....	Light candle and pudding.
Goblet	.....	Fill it with whisky and gin.
Sword	.....	Wrap it up for a present.
Pudding	.....	Pour on brandy, then light it.
Red Suit	.....	Wear it.
Black Boots	.....	Wear them.
Crackers	.....	Pull them to get motto.
Tree	.....	Climb it to put star at the top.
Turkey	.....	Cook it, carve it, eat it.
Tinsel	.....	Decorate tree with it.
Candle	.....	Place it on the table, then light it.
Trifle	.....	Pour sherry into it.
Beard	.....	Wear it.
Motto	.....	Read it.
Brandy	.....	Pour it over Christmas pudding.
Sherry	.....	Pour it into trifle.
Gin	.....	Pour it into goblet and drink it.
Whisky	.....	Pour it into goblet and drink it.
Ribbon	.....	Tie up presents with it.
Star	.....	Place it on top of Christmas tree.
Paper	.....	Wrap up present with it.
Drunkard	.....	Put him to bed (if capable).



**NOTE: This is not an adventure**

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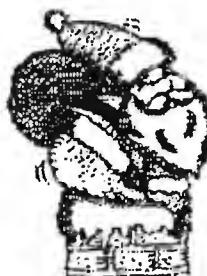
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## R.P.G. & STRATEGY

### CHAMPIONS OF KRYNN : PART 5



as played by **Ron Ralbird** on an Amiga 500

**JELEK**

Mapped on a 16 x 16 grid : 1st figure read left to right, 2nd figure read top to bottom

Map Ref.    Remarks

2 - 15 ..... Entrance - do not trust Skyla.

4 - 14 ..... Armoury where you can buy weapons. Very expensive!  
Get a composite bow if you have the money.

1 - 13 ..... An inn - but you can't rest here.

10 - 14 ..... Skyla's ambush : a very tough fight.  
When you are victorious, Mysellia will offer to join you. Accept.

3 - 12 ..... Tavern - Listen to the gossip.

5 - 12 ..... Magic Shop - again, very expensive.

11 - 9 ..... Entrance to Graveyard.

13 - 8 ..... Old H.Q. Information is here.

13 - 5 ..... Old gravadigger with information.

15 - 3 ..... Here you may rest.

13 - 0 ..... Entrance to safe house, providing Skyla is not with you.  
Password is RUMOR is asked for.

11 - 8 ..... Entrance to Burial Grounds.  
Here there will be several encounters with the undead.

2 - 1 ..... The silver rose bush. Pick the rose then get ready to fight Dragons.

1 - 1 ..... Big fight with the Undead, but you will get excellent magic items,  
such as Wand of Fireballs.

0 - 0 ..... Exit.



## DUNGEON MASTER The Alternative Guide

(Through the Round Window)

by Mary Scott-Parker



This is intended as a gentle guide for those whose idea of lateral thinking is Snakes and Ladders and for whom Snap is far too complex (yes .. we DO exist!). So, if you fit into this category, read on ... all you MENSA members can skip it.

When we first got our Amiga, Dungeon Master was recommended as a game "not to be missed" and enthusiastically we set about it, but after several comprehensive pastings, courtesy of the Ogres in the lurid blue outfits, on level 3, and after the emaciated party had starved to death more than a few times, we reluctantly conceded that perhaps a degree of intelligence would help.

Enter "Knight in Shining Armour" Paul Hardy, whose generosity is unbounded and who patiently set us on the right track without even a hint of condescension. So this is aimed at anyone on whose shelf Dungeon Master now sits, alone and abandoned, where it was flung in disgust, with the cry of "R.P.G.'s .. HUH .. You can KEEP them!" (or words to that effect). So, go on, give yourselves a treat. Lift down the box and blow gently to remove the dust.

Level 1 is the Hall of Champions and from this unlikely-looking bunch, ranging from Fozzie Bear's cousin to a close relative of Lassie you select your four champions. But fear not, while most wouldn't make the cover of *Vogue* (.. Beano, maybe ..) they don't lack pluck. It's advisable to choose champions with highish mana points to begin with because therein lies their spellcasting ability. The characters with no mana points (even though they can gain some later) are, to be quite frank, a bit of a liability in a battle situation. They tend to let you down when you need them most. There are four skills, FIGHTER, NINJA, WIZARD and CLERIC and all the party members can master them all with practice. But, to begin with concentrate on WIZARD and CLERIC skills. Food and water are of great importance to the party and it may help to pick champions who already have food.

Torches, held in the hand, provide light for a while, but the best plan is to save them for emergencies and use the FUL spell to light your way. Click on the lowest power lever LO (just like a microwave really) and then FUL and the dungeon will get lighter. Do this constantly with all of the party members and they will gain valuable experience in WIZARD skills.

Remember to rest the party, to regain mana (click on the zzz button), and always carry spells ready primed so that they can be activated in an instant without loss of mana. Soon you will be rewarded by the message MERLIN (or Gandalf or Skid) HAS GAINED A WIZARD LEVEL. As you gain experience you will be able to progress in your abilities. Soon the party (or at least some of them) will be able to produce FIREBALLS by clicking on LO-FUL-IR. If a message tells you that ELVIS needs more practice with this WIZARD spell just keep the party practicing as they progress through the dungeon (just don't do it when facing a wall ... or you will severely singe your eyelashes ... or worse).

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about level 2 is that one of the wooden doors can be chopped down saving a gold key for level 3 and greatly improving the party's chances of survival. So before using a gold key, use a sword. Give it to anyone with fighting skills and keep hacking away. Clerical skills are very important to survival and the party must learn how to make healing potions. With a flask in hand, click on LO-VI to produce a health potion (a bit like Lucozade) and then try LO-VI-BRO for a cure poison potion, essential when you meet the dreaded, shark-toothed purple worms on level 4 ... come back ... they're not that bad ... well, alright then, yes they are!

Some enemies, like Screamers, leave food behind when killed, so make sure you kill them all and don't just try to sneak past them. Actually Screamers don't take much killing ... a few good slaps will do the trick or a swipe or two with a sword, improving NINJA and FIGHTING skills, but best of all practice FIREBALLS, because at the end of the level some rather neatly wrapped mummies will make mincemeat of the entire party in no time at all, unless you are fully prepared. If a party member dies, just pick up his (or her) bones and belongings and take them with you, because they can easily be resurrected at an Altar of VI, but better than that, save the game regularly, then after a bit of a pasting, you can re-load and re-do the bit you made a complete hash of. (Now wouldn't that be a handy little trick, if we could do the same in real life?).

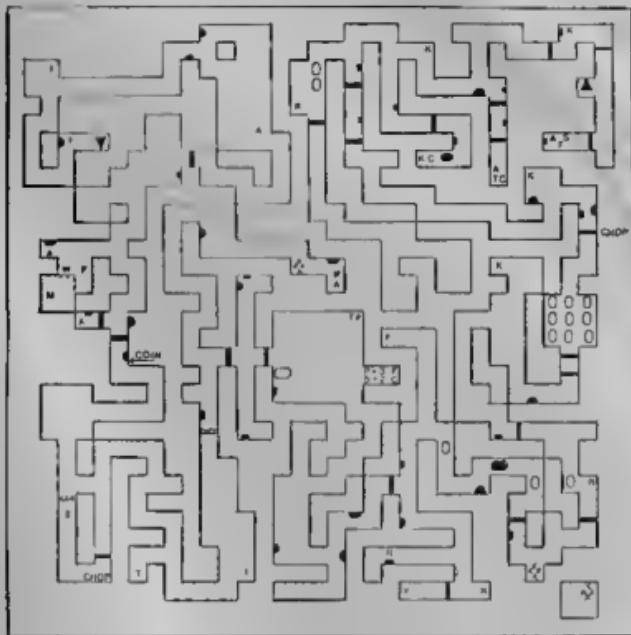
One of the delights of Dungeon Master is its monster-mashing doors. All doors with buttons can be lowered gently onto any monster unsuspecting enough to stand beneath it, imparting damage ranging from a slight headache to something approaching hangover proportions. Just remember not to step backwards after you activate the door button or the monster will be able to follow. If you stand still he will be forced to retreat in preference to having his spine shortened. Soon you will be able to advance to the next power level ... UM ... no, I haven't forgotten its name ... it's called ... UMI (the one for a slow casserole) and produce slightly bigger fireballs or more potent healing potions. Magic boxes are found in various locations and they can freeze monster life for a while, giving you the chance to either leg it to the safety of a closeable door, or to get in a few sneaky whacks, while the monster is thus anaesthetised.

As all the corridors in Dungeon Master tend to look a teeny bit samey, it's easy to get lost (turning around is usually enough to do it) so mapping is essential. It's not difficult, once you know what to do, but it is very time consuming, so to get you going ... here's one I made earlier.

Actually, I think the early levels of Dungeon Master are the hardest, not in any brain-stretching, puzzle-solving way, but because the characters are so feeble and vulnerable. However, this only lasts until you reach the Screamer Regenerator at the end of Level 4 and then all your problems are over, because this little haven can be used as a training school for the party. There is a never ending supply of food, water and straw-filled sacks (Screamers) for bayonet practice. Here you will gain levels quickly and you will be able to start level 5 with four Arnold Schwarzeneggers, instead of four anaemics with weak chests.



Dungeon Master      Level 2



KEY

■	SECRET DOOR	xxx FORCEFIELD
▀	DOOR	K KEY
►	FOUNTAIN	A ARMS OR AMMUNITION
●	PIT	F FOOD
○	PRESSURE PLATE	T TORCH
■	ACTIVATOR (BUTTON, SWITCH, ETC.)	S SCROLL
▲	STAIRS UP	E CHEST
▼	STAIRS DOWN	I COIN
★	TELEPORTER	



# TELEPHONE HELPLINE



<b>DOREEN BAROON</b>	0653 628509	MON - FRI 6pm-10 pm	Spectrum
Weekends - any reasonable time			
<b>JOAN PANCOTT</b>	0305 784155	SUN - SAT 1pm-10pm	Various
<b>ISLA DONALDSON</b>	041 9540602	SUN - SAT Noon-12pm	Amstrad
<b>BARBARA</b>			Spectrum
<b>BASSINGTHWAIGHTE</b>	0935 26174	SUN - SAT 10am-10pm	& BBC
<b>BARBARA GIBB</b>	051 7226731	Afternoon & Evening	Spectrum
<b>DAVE BARKER</b>	071 7321513	Mon-Fri 7pm-10pm	Various
<b>VINCE BARKER</b>	0642 780076	Any reasonable time (In abeyance until January 1983)	C64
<b>MANOY ROORIGUES</b>	0492 877305	Mon-Fri 10am -8pm	Various

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**THE ADVENTURE PROBE**  
**1992 CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT**





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This supplement is free to readers who have  
subscribed in advance for the December 1992  
issue of Adventure Probe.



## CHRISTMAS SPECIALS



by Steve Clay

**Get Rich Quick:** With our pack of imitation teeth. How? I hear you cry. Pop one of these under your pillow every night and due to contractual obligation the tooth fairy must exchange the tooth for a piece of silver. 1 groat per doz.

**Stocking fillers:** Following the recent investigations into the practice of Dr. 'Stumpy' Slasher we can offer you a variety of amputated legs at rock bottom prices. Ideal for kitteing out that ghoulish dungeon. 2 groats each. Matching pairs available. Ideal for cannibal barbecues. Write for price of our special limb meat pack.

**Genuine dragon tooth pendant:** Each tooth, gathered from the lair of a sleeping dragon, is supplied on genuine leather-effect thong. Each purchase supplied with certificate of authenticity. 1 silver piece.

**Certificates of authenticity:** Give those dodgy gifts the genuine feel with these parchment-like certificates. One of our most popular lines. 1 groat per pad.

**Sacks 'n' shirts:** Following the recent merger between the Thieves' Guild and the Federation of Accountants, we offer you extra strong sacks stencilled with the word SWAG at 1 groat per doz. Also available are striped T-shirts. One size fits all. Ideal for freelance burglar just starting out.

**Spice up your buffet:** Exclusive to us. Russian roulette vol-au-vents. One in six is filled with the deadly poison "URGH!".

Catering packs available. 1 silver piece per doz.

**Books:** Now in stock, a huge selection of popular reading matter including:  
Evil Dex's Guide to Disembowelling.

The Good Cavern Guide.

I was a Teenage Wereduck. (unbelievable story!)

Coming out of the Closet. (A bogey-man's tale)

Please write for full list of books available.

**Inflatables:** A variety of Inflatables are available. Whether you want to wave a banana at the arena or you prefer more discreet entertainment, we have what you want. For strict confidentiality write to our 'Inflatable Friend' Dept.

Progress by Barbara Bassingthwaighe

You know that jolly fat man in his red suit?  
His long white beard and shiny black boots,  
With that old reindeer who's nose was so red,  
With the elves who made toys (or so it is said).

It's all changed!



Santa's programmed in his reindeer,  
Computerized his sleigh,  
Automated his workshop,  
To make toys for Christmas day.

Santa's diet has made him thin,  
Rudolph's retired and loves his gin.  
The elves are redundant and live on the dole,  
And that's how it is now at the North Pole.





## ASK GRUE!



Dear Grue,

Ere grue, wossis adventurin lark then? I woz given this ere lump of Technicackle Wizardry them posh geezers call a computer, and no sooner than I plugged it in, THUMP!! I woz on the floor!

Flippin mother had pushed me off me chair end woz deeply engrossed in some 'geme' called Lords of Time! Huh!, I say 'game' in wotsits, coz it woz just a load of words on the screen! Not a flippin alien in sight! wossa use of that I ask yer?

Three channel sound and wonderful graphics my Amstreds got, end ell I see on the screen are words! Not even 3-D words, just normal ones! Disgusted I am, wots more I'm hungry too! Flippin mother spends all the dey tapping one-fingered at the keyboard when she should be cookin my tea! I hopes you print this ere, so's mother (who reads this sort of thing) can get the hint and get me on my computer occasionely to blast a few green ellers. (That's if my joystick still works!)

Your's n ell that

Spotty 13 year old

PS. I'm writin to you since you seem to be the only sane one in this mag thing!

\*

Dear Adrian,

Hmm? Lots of words on the screen ... Got it! Your mother is probably a secret hecker, trying to break into some secret defense network, she sounds like some kind of dangerous commie pervert to me. You should be careful, she might be trying to start World War Three!

What you should do is turn her in to MI5 or the FBI or some other agency who would be interested in apprehending this threat to global peace and harmony. That would definitely get her off the computer for quite a while, unfortunately you would not get your tea for a while either but we can't have it ell can we?

PS. Couldn't you find something other than green aliens to blast at on your computer? ... I'm married to one I'll have you know!!

## HAPPY CHRISTMAS

### by Barbara Bassingthwaighte

**H**ere is Christmas time at last  
**A**nother year has quickly passed  
**P**lenty of presents around the tree  
**P**erfect gifts for you and me  
**Y**oung children sitting on Santa's knee

**C**arol singers on the village green  
**H**appy children in a dream  
**R**obin redbreast in the snow  
**I**cicles hanging all aglow  
**S**nowmen built by children at play  
**T**rees decorated for Christmas day  
**M**ince pies, puddings, turkey too  
**A**lways busy, lots to do  
**S**easonal Greetings from Probe to you.



# Top Five Adventurous T.V. Programmes

## by Jonathan Scott

And here is our host, Cassie Kiss 'Em, to countdown to our fave top filli - oops, Cass Is too busy presenting "America's Top Ten" on Miami Beach to do this once-in-a-lifetime show, but what the hey! Instead, we have Millie M. O'Phnaer, world-famous Thespian, who will do very nicely ....

At number 5 is The Under Years.

One cliche in the labour of our love is having to look under objects, especially other people's beds! Not a very wise thing to do. You never know what you may find - ancient socks and the like. Still, despite the sensitive subject matter, this prog is an enjoyable romp into what you really find under beds!

At number 4 is The Undld.

Okay, it's not actually a T.V. prog. but a cult horror movie, showing the frustrations of an adventurer playing a "sneaky" game with neither UNDO nor RAMSAVE - for instance, he has typed SHOOT UPHOLSTERER, only to discover that, later in the game when he has acquired a little money, he needs to ask the bloke to fix an armchair (an essential part of the game). So he has to reload a SAVED position and go through the 100-location maze which redefines itself every five minutes (annoying, especially when you're in it - you definitely are IN IT!).

At number 3 is The Crustal Maze.

Yep, you guessed it, a maze with the description "You are in the Crustal Maze. Walls of Hovis stretch in all directions.". A pain, isn't it? Not quite .... all you have to do is EAT WALLS and, as well as getting a little of that essential dietary fibre, you have made an A-MAZE-ING ESCAPE. If it was possible to do this in other adventures, it would make most adventurer's day by chopping out one of the undeniable chores of adventuring ... Mazes!

At number 2 is Have I Got Grues For You.

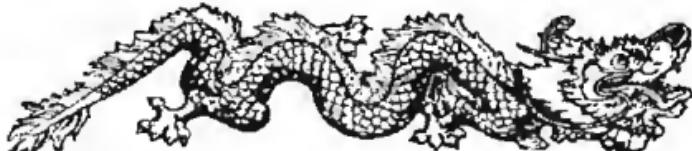
A homage to Infocom's classic adventures. You couldn't even peep into an underground cave system without running into one of these blighters. But then, where would we be without our furry, vicious pals and it's done wonders for the Ormskirk Tourist Industry - hasn't it, Borphee?

At number 1 is ... drumroll, followed by accidental breaking of drumsticks and frustrating cry (a reminder that you should never use a chicken's leg as a musical implement). Yep, it's Faulty Towers, the classic sitcom.

No, not that T.V. programme but, in actual fact (eh? All facts are actual), a DIY series dealing with the intricacies of repairing your own tower with its locked door (unlocked at present), spiral staircase (who forgot the wood?), room at the top (which conveniently is on the ground floor) and whatnot. Indeed, the whole shebang is catered for in the programme's 23 foolproof, easy-to-follow editions. Its presenter Ze Towarzat Jakbilst (pronounced, 'The Tower that Jack Built') glides through each edition in a truly graceful fashion. Indeed the most adventurous T.V. Programme. One problem, though, only a total idiot would go about repairing their own tower. They'd be better off hiring UPP, UPP & AVAY LTD who do the best all-round fix-it for under 50 groats in the whole of Thargl. After all, the owner might fall down the staircase and break their hake; which is, by the way, an upmarket alternative to red herrings, carried widely by yuppies, or perhaps that should be guppies!

\* \* \* \* \*

If these programmes aren't adventurous enough for you, try balancing a wok on the roof, and you'll have, before your very eyes, Satellite T.V. There must be something adventurous in there!

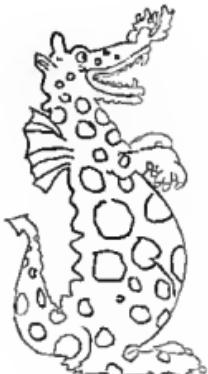


## Gilbert the Dragon

### by Barbara Bassingthwaighe

I am a brave dragon, Gilbert is my name,  
I often feature in an adventure game.  
It was a cold wet winter's day  
When Barbara Glbb came my way.

All dragons and orcs know her name,  
She's ruthless in an adventure game.  
She stares at first, then prods and kicks,  
And gets up to all sorts of tricks.



So when Barbara Glbb you see,  
Climb up into the nearest tree.  
Then quiet as a mouse you stay,  
Until she decides to go away.

So dragons, dwarves and giants, look out,  
There is no peace when she's about.  
She will not quit until the end,  
Which send us creatures round the bend.

Hi Barbara! - Gilbert.

## HOUR PRICE MUSIC

presents

Two brand new releases from "Middle Earth Music"

### THORIN - CLASSIC GOLD (Vol.1)

Includes such memorable hits as "SINGING ABOUT GOLD", "SILENCE IS GOLDEN", "UNCHAINED MELODY (the Elven King's Dungeon mix)", "IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TODAY (You're sure of the bulbous eyes)", "WHAT'S BEHIND THAT (ROUND) GREEN DOOR", "WALKING IN A WINTER WILDERLAND", and "MISTY (The Mountains mix)".

and

### THORIN SINGS THE BEATLES

Thorin and his band, Orc's Manoeuvres In The Dark, perform some of the great songs by Lennon and McCartney.

includes "THE LONG AND WINDING PASSAGE", "ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE (a curious map, a ring and a troll called Bert)", "CARRY THAT WEIGHT (The Fat Hobbit mix)", "THE END (you have scored 107%)", "GET BACK (I can't see any 'back' here)", "HELP! (you're doing fine)", "I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER (than to attack the nasty goblin with the lunch Elrond gave me)", "MAXWELL'S SILVER (small and curious)", "HAMMER WAIT (time passes)", "YOU NEVER GIVE ME YOUR MONEY (only some stupid map)", "I'LL BE BACK (In the goblin's dungeon)", "(eat Gandalf) YOU CAN'T DO THAT", "SHE CAME IN THROUGH THE DUNGEON WINDOW", and "YOU WON'T SEE ME (I'm wearing the valuable golden ring)".

A must for all music lovers everywhere.

Coming soon . . . . THORIN SINGS DES O'CONNOR,

THORIN SINGS QUEEN

and the eagerly awaited THORIN SINGS QUIETLY.

(written by Gareth Pitchford)



## The Balrog and the Grue

"Will you walk a little faster?"

    said the Balrog to the Grue

"I spy a plump Adventurer .....

    he'll do nicely for my stew."

"Not so fast" the Grue replied

    with an evil, toothy smile.

"This one's mine ....." I saw him first,

    I've followed him a mile."

The Balrog said "Oh after you .....

    that's just find and dandy,

But his sword is sharp, his lamp is bright

    and he's got his spell book handy."

Said Grue "Just let his light go out,

    And then I'll make a grab.

I'll roast him slowly on a spit .....

    I'm partial to kebab."

The Balrog said "Oh, are you sure?

    They make a lovely stew.

With spiders, newts and vegetables .....

    It warms you through and through."

"Or what about a Cavern Pie?

    All spicy, hot and peppered .....

Adventurer topped with fluffy mash,

    Well they make a change from Shepherd!"

"Adventurer soup" the Grue then sighed  
"Like mother used to make."  
His eyes grew misty at the thought  
Of the goodies she would bake.  
The Balrog sharply nudged the Grue.  
"You'll have to be much quicker.  
His sword is down, his spell book's shut  
And his lamp's begun to flicker."  
The gruesome twosome crept up close.  
Our Hero never guessed it.  
Then suddenly he spied a knob,  
Reached out his hand .... and pressed it.  
The ground behind him opened up.  
With two intakes of breath ....  
The Grue and Balrog disappeared ....  
And fell to certain death.  
The Adventurer pressed the knob again,  
Heard just a tiny buzz  
With a puzzled look he turned around ....  
"Now I wonder what that one does!"

Mary Scott-Parker





## PRATCHETT'S WORLD



by Steve Clay

Anyone out there who has yet to discover Terry Pratchett's Discworld series is a very lucky person indeed. You have the whole experience to come. Discworld veterans will know the joy of a new Pratchett release. The funniest fantasy series ever kicked off with *The Colour of Magic* - older readers may remember the adventure from *Prehna* - which followed the trials and tribulations of the wizard Rincewind and the tourist Twoflower and their travels around Ankh-Morpork and subsequent burning down of said city.

The first novel introduced a number of characters that would pop up again and again through the series. Rincewind, whose ability with languages was bettered only by his ability to avoid death. The Librarian, a pleasant enough fellow who was accidentally turned into an orang-utan and refused to be turned back. And the luggage. The luggage is constructed from sentient peerwood an unusual material that follows its owner everywhere! This comes in useful when, in the second book *The Light Fantastic*, the group, including Cohen the barbarian, a man past his prime and struck down by piles, are trapped only to be saved by the homing instincts of the luggage.

The Discworld is a large flat disc carried through space on the back of four elephants which ride on the back of the giant space turtle Great A'Tuin. Magic is the rule of the day and the wizards play a major part in everything. As does Death, who talks in block capitals. Pratchett has taken all the clichés of fantasy and turned them on their head. Wizards are renowned smokers so on the Discworld they cough and wheeze whenever called to exert themselves. Cohen is the famous barbarian, but through being so brave and fearless he has reached old age and is suffering old age problems.

It is the character interaction that puts the Discworld series above the rest. The depth of the various beings is superb. There is also slapstick, as in "GUARDS, GUARDS!" when the city watch are trying to shoot down the dragon that is terrorizing the city. One of the watch decides that shooting the dragon is a million to one shot. There follows a collection of gags ending with the brave archer standing on one leg with an eye closed trying to hit the low-flying lizard.

Since the release of *Colour of Magic* there have been numerous imitators of Pratchett's style but none have come close. There have been some poor attempts at pastiche<sup>1</sup>. There have been many comparisons of Pratchett and Douglas Adams. My own opinion is that while Adams was first, Pratchett is funnier.

Another touch of brilliance are the footnotes used to convey more detail. These add that little bit extra and give depth to the Discworld.

---

[1] PASTICHE - a collection of meat and veg. wrapped in pastry. Esme Weatherwax!

---

There are other non-Discworld novels by Terry Pratchett including the *Truckers* series for young readers. *Truckers* recently appeared on T.V. and there is a follow-up planned. The whole series is available on video (£7.99) and well worth the asking price.

The novels of Terry Pratchett are as follows:-

**COLOUR OF MAGIC:** The first instalment of the travels of Rincewind and Twoflower.

**THE LIGHT FANTASTIC:** Dragons that exist only if you believe in them. Aging barbarians. It's all here in the concluding episode of the *Colour of Magic*.

**EQUAL RITES:** A dying wizard bestows his staff on the seventh son of a seventh son. Except it wasn't a son. Womens lib. meets the Unseen University. Introduces Granny Weatherwax.

**MORT:** When Daath takes on an apprentice all kinds of trouble is let loose. Mort brings emotion to the job and that's the last thing it needed.

**SOURCERY:** The seventh son of a seventh son is a wizard, the seventh son of a wizard is supposed to be impossible. The impossible crops up nine times out of ten and the Discworld gets itself a sourcerer!

**WYRD SISTERS:** Pratchett digs into the Shakespeare, throws in a vagabond witch, some actors and a ghost and all hell breaks out.

**PYRAMIDS:** A trainee assassin returns home after his father's death to discover all kinds of skulduggery amongst the religious leaders. Includes guest appearances from various strange gods!

**GUARDS, GUARDS!**: When a large dragon begins to fry the inhabitants of Ankh-Morpork it is left to the city watch to deal with it.

**Moving Pictures:** Possibly the best Discworld novel to date. Follows the birth of the movies on the Disc and the heroics of Gaspo the wonder dog and his immaculate friend Laddle. Also included are Victor and Ginger the first stars of Holy Wood!

**REAPER MAN:** Death is given his notice and decides to spend some time just living. Problem is there is a queue forming in the other world.

The above are available in paperback and hardback.

The following two are available only in hardback:- **WITCHES ABROAD:** Not read

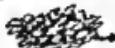
**SMALL GODS:** Exploring the strength of a religion based on fear. Includes a god who has lost most of his power and can just about control the mind of a tortoise.

Non-Discworld novels:- **GODS DEMONS:** The battle between good and evil. Co-written with Neil Gaiman. Look out for the bit with Trivia machine in the transport cafe!

**TRUCKERS/DIGGERS/WINGS:** The trilogy featuring the gnomes. Meant for younger readers but great fun for everyone.

**STRATA/THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN:** Two early Pratchett novels. *Strata* gives a few pointers to the Discworld and its secrets!

If you have not read any of the above, I would suggest you start at the beginning and work through. That way you take in more information of the Discworld's traits and the development of the various characters. By the way, the Discworld is recyclable. You can reread them as often as you like. The jokes, like a good wine, get better.



## PUZZLES

### Quote

G\*\*ted; \*\*\*thful; Cl\*\*\*et; Br\*\*\*e; R\*\*\*; \*\*\*ify; In\*\*\*ent; Hes\*\*\*te; T\*\*\*ng; Stuf\*\*;  
D\*\*ble; C\*\*\*er; Abs\*\*\*ute; V\*\*\*; Car\*\*; Pro\*\*; De\*\*\*e; \*\*eal; C\*\*\*ave.

The following groups of letters have to be inserted in the above to form proper words.  
The inserts, when read in order, will form a quotation from Johnson, in a letter to Boswell.

ARE ARE BE EBE FY ID IDL IF ITA ITA LE NOT NOT OU RY RYI SOL SOL YOU

\*\*\*\*\*

### Horse Feathers

Can you figure out what these lines are saying?

11 was a race horse;

12 was 12.

1111 race at 524;

12112 at 221.

But 13 ran at 921.

So that's the 14 me!



\*\*\*\*\*

### Fruity Problem

Mary gave away 1/3rd of her oranges and then sold 2/3rds of the remainder. She then had a dozen left. How many did she start with?

\*\*\*\*\*

### Top Mar-ks!

Use the following clues to complete the 'MAR' words:

This mar is stöne: mar\*\*\*

So is this, but rather more precious: mar\*\*\*\*\*

This mar appears on the breakfast menu: mar\*\*\*\*\*

This mar makes a big bang: mar\*\*\*

This mar is a vegetable: mar\*\*\*

This mar dies for a Cause: mar\*\*\*

You'll get wet feet in this mar!: mar\*\*

One letter completes this Persian poet: \*mar

If you have this mar you call it gout: \*\*mar\*\*\*\*\*

Take a partner for this mar: mar\*\*\*\*\*



Number Trouble - sent in by Dot Vaughan

How does  $3 + 4 + 9 + 12 + 22 + 24 = 1666$

(Clue: Italian capital letters)

\*\*\*\*\*

Cash Quiz

Stella, Marla and Julia have only five- and tenpenny pieces in their money boxes. Stella's amount is now double Julia's. When all had 15p less than they have now, Stella's amount was one and a half times Marla's. When all had 25p less, Julia had half what Marla had. How much has Julia now?

\*\*\*\*\*

Relativity

Three men named Preston, Brown and Steele each have two daughters. From the following statements, say which daughters are named Preston, Brown and Steele:

Carol is glad Anne is not her sister.

Mr. Brown likes Mr. Preston but does not like Molra's father.

Jane says Mr. Steele is more handsome than her own father, but less handsome than Anne's.

Mr. Preston thinks Jane a better dancer than either of his two children.

Molra's father borrowed Rachel's father's lawn-mower because he had lent his own to Carol's father.

\*\*\*\*\*

Five to Six

By adding a letter to the front of the solution to the clue on the left, you have the solution to the clue on the right.

1. End of the day (5) - Chess piece (6)
2. Pointed missile (5) - Vegetable (6)
3. Lubricated (5) - Stained (6)
4. Snake (5) - Run in stockings (6)
5. To fish (5) - Confused mass (6)
6. Girl's name (5) - Spite (6)
7. Door-keeper (5) - Fast flowing oil well (6)
8. Crest (5) - Card game (6)
9. Moved gradually (5) - Jammed (6)
10. Terrible (5) - Legal (6)



\*\*\*\*\*

### Age-old Problem

Mum is 60 and the ages of her three children add up to 48. In how many years will the children's joint ages and Mum's age be the same?

\*\*\*\*\*

### Missing Middles

What four-letter word will fit into the middle of all the letters below to make proper words?

W\*\*\*\*er, Sy\*\*\*\*e, F\*\*\*\*e, C\*\*\*\*e, B\*\*\*\*er

What am I? by Barbara Bassingthwaigle

My first is in BACON but not in PIG

My second is in CYCLE but not in BIKE

My third is in TRUTH but not in TRUST

My fourth is in BIRD but not in SING

My fifth is in VIXEN but not in FOX

My sixth is in FRESH but not in FRUIT

My seventh is in NUT but not in BOLT

My eighth is in CREAM but not in BEAT

My ninth is in BLACK but not in BLUE

My tenth is in CAKES but not in CAFE

My eleventh is in ICE but not in FROZEN

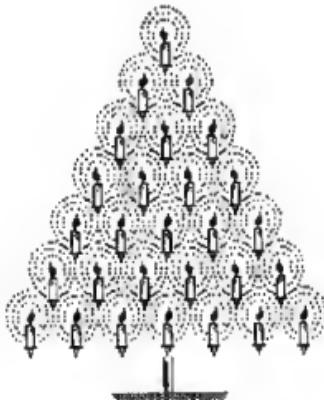
My twelfth is in BANG but not in BOOM

My thirteenth is in BRUNCH but not in LUNCH

My fourteenth is in SOCK but not in SLIPPER

My fifteenth is in TALL but not in SHORT

My whole is a book by Charles Dickens



My first is in SNOWBALL but not in SNOW  
My second is in TURKEY but not in CHICKEN  
My third is in BALL but not in BELL  
My fourth is in GIN but not in WHISKY  
My fifth is in DAY but not in NIGHT  
My sixth is in TOY but not in TOP  
My whole is a drink and I don't mean tea!

QUIZ compiled by Lol Oakes

What do the initial letters stand for -

e.g. 28 = L. of the A. = Letters of the Alphabet

1) 3 = B. M. (S.H.T.R.)	31) 5 = D. In a Z. C.
2) 7 = C. of the R.	32) 1805 = B. of T.
3) 49 = S. S.	33) 22 = T. L. D.
4) 147 = M. B. at S.	34) 192 = D. E.
5) 1 = W. on a U.	35) 28 = D. In F. (E. In L. Y.)
6) 144 = S.I. In a S. F.	36) 25 = Y. In a S. W.
7) 8 = P. In the S. S.	37) 273 = M. C. (A. Z.)
8) 32 = D. F. (A. W. W. F.)	38) 7 = D. S.
9) 1666 = G. F. of L.	39) 18 = H. on a G. C.
10) 13 = B. D.	40) 21 = K. of the D.
11) 7 = W. of the W.	41) 100 = P. In a P.
12) 3 = M. In a B. (J. K. J.)	42) 8 = P. In a G.
13) 3 = C. In a F.	43) 8 = S. on an D.
14) 10 = D. S.	44) 6 = P. on a S. T.
15) 64 = S. R. of E.	45) 5280 = F. In a M.
16) 12 = D. of C.	46) 4 = S. In a D. of C.
17) 180 = M. S. at D.	47) 2468 = W. D. W.A.
18) 54 = C. In a P. (I. J.)	48) 10 = Y. In a D.
19) 64 = S. on a C. B.	49) 3 = M. (A. D.)
20) 39 = S. (J. B.)	50) 4 = H. of the A.
21) 7 = L. G. S. In the B. S.	51) 25 = C. D. (J. C. B.)
22) 60 = T. S.	52) 84 = K. on a G. P.
23) 29028 = H. of E. In F.	53) 200 = P. for P. G. In M.
24) 15 = N. of P. In a R. U. T.	54) 100 = T. E.
25) 5 = C. of the W.	55) 24 = B. In a B. P.
26) 57 = H. V.	56) 10 = G. B. S. on a W.
27) 88 = T. F. L.	57) 15 = M. on a D. M. C.
28) 1912 = S. of the T.	
29) 1760 = Y. In a M.	
30) 13 = N. of P. In a R. L. T.	





## CRYPTIC CLUE:

The missing offspring is called Mary.

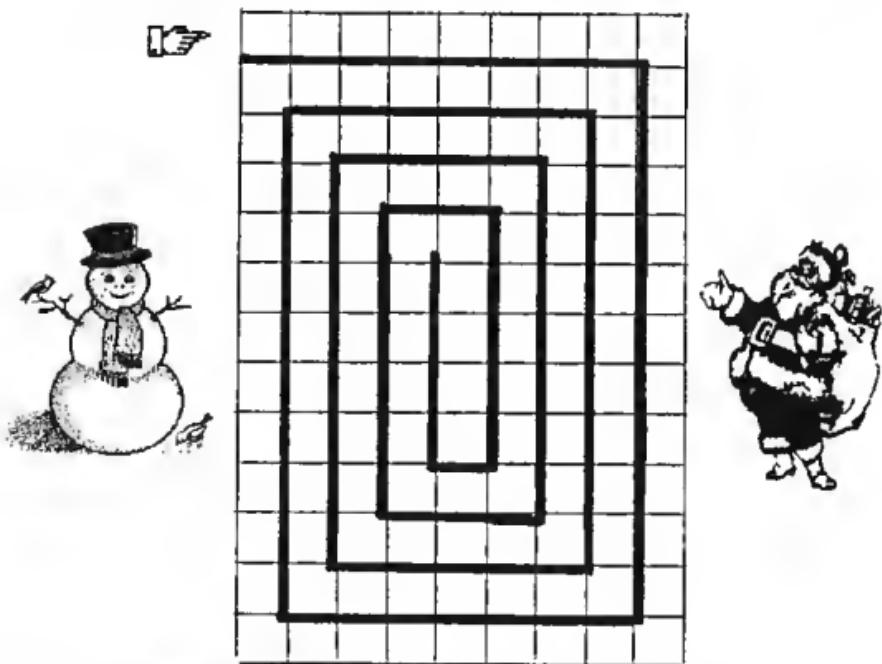
## CHRISTMAS STOCKING CROSSWORD

compiled by Barbara Bassingthwaighe

### ACROSS:

- ✓ 1. Pull the ropes and hear them ring (5)
- ✓ 6. Adam's mate (3)
- ✓ 7. Santa's gifts to children usually (4)
- ✓ 10. To slowly drink (3)
- 12. Spring, winter, etc. (7)
- 14. Cook the turkey (5)
- 15. Evergreen tree (3)
- 18. It's dark (5)
- 19. 14lbs. equals (5)
- ✓ 21. Wait a long, long time (4)
- ✓ 22. A pack of cards has four of them (3)
- 23. He throws axes in adventures (3)
- 25. Slide on the snow (3)
- ✓ 27. Consume food (3)
- 28. It could be full of sweets (3)
- 30. Compass direction (4)
- 31. Hand jewellery (4)
- 32. Tinkerbell was one (5)
- 33. Tinkerbell has a pair of them (5)
- 34. Pirates have one, ladies have two (8)
- 37. This is a cracker (3)
- 38. Slang for Americans (5)
- 39. Rudolph's doctor (3)
- ✓ 1. ---- bitter (4)
- ✓ 2. Christmas --- (3)
- ✓ 3. This falls in autumn (4)
- 4. Tales (7)
- ✓ 5. Not we but -- (2)
- ✓ 8. Not over, under, or in, but -- (2)
- ✓ 9. The initials of a Speccy magazine (2)
- ✓ 10. Cold, soft and white (4)
- ✓ 11. Letter, mail, etc. (4)
- ✓ 13. Repent, I say, repent (7)
- ✓ 16. Children hang them up on Christmas Eve (8)
- ✓ 17. Jesus was born in one (6)
- ✓ 20. Go backwards (2)
- 24. Plump, like Santa (3)
- ✓ 25. Nettles and bees do this (5)
- ✓ 26. Three people who came to see baby Jesus (5)
- ✓ 28. Presents (5)
- ✓ 30. They contain pupils (4)
- ✓ 31. Ice skating arenas (5)
- ✓ 32. Cools you when hot (3)
- ✓ 33. Beat everyone in a race (3)
- 35. Grain (3)
- ✓ 36. SID maybe (3)





Place your answers clockwise around the puzzle, using the last letter of your answer as the first letter of your next answer.

CLUES

1. Children build them in winter (7)
2. You have to crack them (4)
3. They are hung up on Christmas Eve (8)
4. Another name for Father Christmas (13)
5. A member of the choir (6)
6. One had a red nose (8)
7. Father Christmas lands here at night (8)
8. Father Christmas uses one to travel (6)
9. Part of a pig, usually roasted (3)
10. You kiss under this (6)
11. Santa comes on Christmas \*\*\* (3)
12. One of Santa's helpers (8)
13. Jack makes it very cold (5)
14. Could decorate the Christmas tree (8)
15. Brightens up the Christmas tree (8)
16. Look nice at the top of the Christmas trees (5)
17. Spring, summer, etc., (8)
18. Not day, but ..... (5)
19. Roast it on Christmas day (8)
20. Long cake covered in chocolate (7)
21. A present from a wise man (4)
22. One of Santa's reindeer (6)
23. English winter birds (8)
24. A Christmas carol had 3 (6)

## WHAT NEXT??? by June Rowe

Five computer owners with peculiar (spell-checked) names had to replace certain bits of their equipment. Can you sort out who owned which computer and how much each one spent on which new piece?

	Amiga	Acorn	Spectrum	Amstrad	Atari	£25	£15	£20	£35	£10	Powerpack	Keyboard	Joystick	Mouse	Interface
Vicar Jackson	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Juniper Royal	○	✗	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Barbarian Gblet	✓	✓	✗	✗	○	✓	✓	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Lairy Horrified	✗	✗	○	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Nib Rumbustious	✗	○	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Powerpeck	✗	✓	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Keyboard	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Joystick	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Mouse	✗	✗	✗	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Interface	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
£25	○	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
£15	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
£20	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
£35	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
£10	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗



NAME	COMPUTER	COST	ITEM
VG	AMIGA	£20	Powerpack
JP	AMIGA	£15	Interface
YJ	SPECTRUM	£10	Keyboard
LM	ACORN	£25	Mouse
NR	ACORN	£15	Interface

1. The person with the longest name owns the Atari.
2. The Joystick cost £15.
3. Juniper Royal's computer doesn't need a new poserpack.
4. Lairy Horrified's new mouse didn't cost £20.
5. The interface was bought for the Amiga.
6. A powerpack replacement wasn't necessary for the Acorn or Amstrad.
7. Vicar Jackpot had to spend £10 on a new part.
8. Nib Rumbustious has an Acorn.
9. It wasn't the Amstrad that cost its owner £15.
10. £25 was the cost of the interface.
11. The keyboard was bought for the Atari.

Christmas Word Search compiled by Barbara Bassingthwaigle

CREINDEERWNWH  
RH COMPUTERIOF  
FERNSCROGNLNR  
CIAIHGHGIELSSO  
AACGSLNODYTLS  
RCKEHTURKEYCT  
ONEEDSMYDNARB  
LARUSANATREAH  
SMSHHOBWSANTA  
AWYSRROBINGTL  
YODAAESONDERL  
ONTSPUDDINGEY  
TSNODITAROCED

BRANDY	HOLLY	SLEIGH
CAKE	ICE	SNOWMAN
CAROLS	PUDDING	SNOW
CHRISTMAS	REDNOSE	STAR
COMPUTER	REINDEER	TOY
CRACKERS	ROAST	TREE
DECORATIONS	ROBIN	TURKEY
FROST	SANTA	WINE
GIN		



WORD SEARCH (Objects Found) - Compiled by Doreen Bardon



BIRD	HOOK	WAND	DAGGER
DOG	BUCKET	TRIDENT	BOTTLE
NOTE	RUCKSACK	OIL	FOOD
TIN	FLINT	MEDALLION	MATCH
SHIP	STONE	BAG	PICK
MAP	SPELLS	RING	ORB
LAMP	CLOAK	NET	CAULDRON
ROPE	EGG	RUG	HELMET
KEYS	BOOTS	GAS	GLOVES
CHEST	CHAIR	SWORD	UNIFORM
SCROLL	BELT	KNIFE	BOW
ARROW	TALISMAN	GUN	CANDLE
HAMMER	SPOON	SHIELD	MIRROR
CHAIN	LOG	NAIL	MAGNIFYING GLASS
TORCH	POT	COAT	RED HERRING



Starting at the top left hand corner, take all unused letters, and find the secret object.

See how many adventure games you can find in this story.

### Classic Adventure by Keith Burnard

While on a holiday to remember, I wandered into the Africa gardens. By the black fountain I came across the enchanted cottage. Behind the green door was the wizard of Akyrz. He spoke to me and said 'This is a red alert. I'm living on borrowed time, you must help me. Go to the temple of terror and find Laskar's crystals. If you pass the test I will ~~zzzz~~ for ever. I warn you this is a fairly difficult mission, but you should be up to the challenge, just use your loaf. Good luck!"

Wearing my favourite white feather cloak and with my rucksack on my back, off I trotted. I boarded the ship of doom and was soon in trouble. After the ship wreck in the Bermuda triangle, I swam to the desert island. Hoping I wasn't marooned, I wandered through the swamp and up the mountain of Ket. Here I met ten little Indians in search of angels. They told me to look for the time traveller. They seemed to me to be very dodgy geezers.

Wandering into the forest at worlds end, I came to the castle of riddles. On entering the red door in the dark tower, I met the time traveller. "Answer the riddle and I will help you. What was Humphrey Bogart to have said in the bar?"

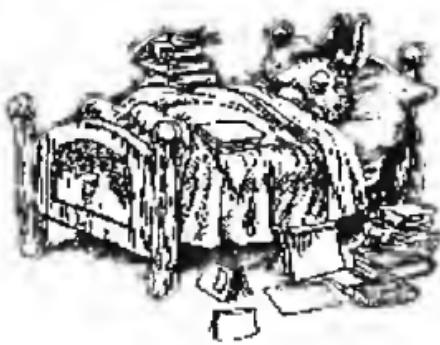
Answer ..... On giving the right answer he told me "This is top secret but say boggit when you want to return to the Wiz-biz and a life boat will appear." Although this sounded like a lot of ballyhoo I remembered the word.

Leaving the forest I met the Thompson twins. After a long chat I wondered if they were a double agent. Hal Hal I then found myself walking into the lost temple. I first met the black knight, but as he was under the curse of Calutha, he let me escape. I next encountered some mutant spiders, their venom was fatal, but by turning myself into Jack the ripper I hit out and cut them up.

My next stalker was the wolfman, but once again I was too clever and turned into a werewolf simulator and killed him. Next I came to a statue, and there in the eye of Bain I found one of the crystals. Searching the treasure of the Santa Maria, I ignored the cup, the jade stone, the golden locket and the golden sword of Bhakhor, until I found the second crystal.

Remembering the words of the time traveller I said "boggit" and to my surprise a life boat arrived. I climbed in and away it sailed through the lost twilight to the enchanted cottage. The wizard was there, looking for his staff of power. I handed over the crystals to the thankful wizard, who hid them in case the taxman cometh - the miser.

The quest was over. This seemed like a never ending story and at the end of the day I wondered if it was all in my imagination, a nightmare, a case of total reality delusion.





## ROAL'S TALE



"written for Ann"

In the west a great black cloud appeared from out of nowhere and began to fill the sky above Ska Dhor. As the 'cloud' grew and the sky darkened, an enormous shadow covered the land around the base of Ska Dhor causing all manner of creatures to scurry to the safety of their lairs, their hearts pounding in their ears as they ran. If they had but chanced to look up and gaze at the 'cloud' they would have seen that it was formed by a mass of birds, black of plumage and sharp of talon, who wheeled and soared in the air as though waiting for some signal to guide their next move. Suddenly that signal was given and the vast armada of Korats, for that was what they were, surged forward as one and headed in the direction of Torag Kinh.

Meanwhile on the edge of a small babbling brook a halfling by the name of Roal was busy doing battle with a large brown trout and quite oblivious of the approaching birds, until darkness befell him as the 'cloud' passed overhead. Glancing up he noticed the dark sheen of their plumage and the sharpness of their talons and casting his rod to one side he quickly scampered up the bank . . . with a flick of its tail, the brown trout dove to the bottom of the sparkling brook and settled beneath a large rock.

Just then two of the 'outriders' of the flock spotted the halfling clambering away from the brook and with a quickness that belied their size, swooped down towards the unsuspecting Roal. With his eyes fixed on the nearby safety of a large hollow tree-stump Roal had no reason to look over his shoulder but if he had, what he would have seen would have surely spurred him to greater efforts for there, just behind him, were two large Korats, their beaks gaping wide and their talons fully extended. With his breath burning a hole in his chest and little short legs pumping for all they were worth, Roal drew ever nearer to the small hole in the hollow-stump and then just as it seemed that all his efforts were worthwhile the first of the 'outriders' struck!! The first Roal knew of it was when he felt the hot breath on the back of his neck and then a smell of decay reached his nostrils, only to be replaced by the scent of warm blood . . . his own . . . as the razor-sharp talons of the Korat seared into his shoulder.

In the taverns and alehouses of the kingdom of Tousel tales had often been told, albeit in hushed tones and whispered phrases, of the cunning and guile of the Korats and of their undoubted talents as 'bringers of death', but there had always been the odd one or two story-tellers willing to embellish their monologues with accounts of the Korat's one great weakness . . . their inability to control the 'blood-lust' when it came upon them. It was this weakness that was to save the life of Roal the halfling as he scurried towards the hollow tree-stump, for as the first 'outrider' delivered its telling blow the second Korat smelt the fresh, warm blood . . . and in its urgency to obtain its share, cannoned into the first bird causing it to relax its grip on Roal. In that instant, that spells the difference between life and death, Roal made one last frantic effort to reach the safety of the hole and with a twist of his body flung himself desperately forward. With a blood-curdling screech the two 'outriders' struck out at Roal, only to rip the boot from his left leg as he hurtled head first through the gaping hole and then buffetting the air with their mighty wings soared into the sky to retake their place on the edges of the dark 'cloud'.

In the warm, moist safety of the hollow tree-stump a small halfling quivered in a dark corner and sobbed uncontrollably . . .

... As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness and the searing pain in his chest began to recede, Roal glanced around and tried to take stock of his present situation. The air in the hollow tree-stump was heavy with a 'darkness' that spoke of decay and misuse, whilst the ground upon which he now sat was covered with a thick blanket of soft, moist leaves in the region of his right foot and with panic lodging itself firmly in his throat, he shifted position slightly in order to ascertain just what was causing it. As the fear of the unknown pulsed wildly in his temples he kicked out, scattering the leaves nearest to his foot and revealing a small furry creature not unlike a surrel but with the soft amber eyes of the pine-rats of the great Northern Forest.

"That was a close call young halfling" croaked the creature, "for a moment there I thought the Korats had you." Then, with a shake of his head, it approached Roal, with a bravado far in excess of its diminutive size, and perched itself on his upper left thigh. For a few moments Roal gazed at the small furry creature as it preened its whiskers, removing the odd remnant of leaf and generally straightening out the crinkled ends and then the urgency of the situation struck home . . . . "I must get to my people," cried Roal, "They are in great danger from the Korats but even my sturdy little legs are incapable of out-running them." Tears of frustration welled up in the corners of his eyes and he racked his brain in an effort to figure out the impossible. "Their strong wings will carry them to Torag Minh long before my short little legs and without my warning all my people will be taken unawares by the arrival of the Korats. The ground will run with rivers of blood and the 'death-cries' of the Korats will echo long and loud through the land of Torag Minh." Thumping the ground in despair, Roal began to sob uncontrollably . . . his little body shaking with every convulsion.

"There is a way" whispered the creature, "because the Korats will not fly the direct route, instead they will skirt the realm of the Grundars and fly to the far east, for even the Korats have their fears and Grundars are the one thing they fear most in all the land. The reasons are hidden in the mists of time, but it is said that the Grundars once slew more than 1000 of their number, when they stumbled across a flock of Korats who had just gorged themselves on a herd of unsuspecting Nugs. The satiated Korats were roosting when a war-band of Grundars came across them and the slaughter was incredible to behold. Only one Korat lived to tell the tale and the rest were put to the sword. Even to this day the Grundar still wear the talons and beaks of the slaughtered Korats hanging from their war-belts. They are much prized possessions and are handed down from one generation to another. The Korats have never forgotten the incident and to this day they never over-fly the realm of the Grundars."

Roal's heart skipped a beat; he would take the direct route and cross the realm of the Grundars . . . that was the answer, but would he succeed. The Grundars were renowned hunters, the tales of their tracking abilities were legend in the taverns of Tousel and it was said that they could detect the scent of their prey from more than 500 paces away. He would have to be swift, but more importantly, would have to be silent. "Thank you" yelped Roal. "The fate of my people depends upon my speed, so I must leave now. However without your advice there would have been no purpose in my leaving this place." With that he tentatively peered out of the hole in the hollow stump and seeing that all was as it should be, emerged once more into the bright light of day.



Making his way across to whara his left boot lay crumpled and torn, Roal picked it up and peered at the talon marks in its haal. A shiver of fear ran down his spine as he recalled just how close the cold hand of death had been to his heart and as he pulled on the boot an inner urgency overtook him and he knew that he MUST complete his task . . . his people depended upon him. With a quick wave in the direction of the hollow stump and the creature it contained, Roal turned in the direction of the realm of the Grundar and set off at a fast trot. Behind him a small voice cried "Good luck halfling and I hope you get there in time . . . because I know what it is like to be the last of your race!" In less than the length of one stride Roal crossed the divide between bright sunlight and cold green darkness to find himself in the chilly confines of the great forest that marked the outer boundary of the realm of the Grundars. For just a moment his short little legs seemed to take on a will of their own and threatened to bring Roal to a sudden halt, but with the taste of fear still sour in his throat the small halfling clenched his fists and plunged onwards into the waiting unknown. Meanwhile, in a small hollow tree-stump a tiny surreal tentatively rubbed the 'ourat' it now clutched in its paw and trusted in the ancient powers contained in this legendary sacred object to guard his new-found friend from danger. Perhaps one day they would meet again and Roal would relate to him the tale of his journey to his people . . . but then again, perhaps not!

Brushing aside the overhanging branches that threatened to bar his progress Roal sped on through the dark green forest, his eyes darting this way and that in an attempt to ensure that nothing was following him. Now and then a dark shadow fluttered into his vision but a small change of direction and a quickening of pace soon caused him to breathe a little easier. Roal glanced upwards but the overhead canopy was too dense to allow more than just a hint of sunlight through and what did descend towards the forest floor quickly darkened in hue, casting a strange green tinge over all that it touched. "How far had he come?" he wondered, "How far is there to go?" Such thoughts as these flitted through his head like small dark butterflies, each one adding its own pinch of doubt to the worries that were already clogging Roal's mind. "Where were the Korats now? Had they outflanked the realm of Grundars or was there a chance that their intense loathing of all that was 'Grundar' still burnt brightly enough to ensure that they gave the forest as wide a berth as possible?" With that Roal paused for a moment, his breath rasping warmly in his chest and took stock of his situation. "It is no good just blundering blindly on, I have to make sure that I am going in the right direction or else I could end up running in circles until either my legs give way or my heart bursts with exertion and then who will save my people?" panted Roal, quickly glancing around for some sign to guide him in the direction of his destiny.

As a child Roal had often spent time in the company of Kacj, an old and wizened halfling who dwelt on the outskirts of the village, listening to his tales and learning of the ways of his people. It was Kacj that had taught him how to fish for the brown trout and Kacj that had shown him how to bait traps to catch the small blue creatures that lived in dark burrows in the meadowlands . . . strange little creatures with long ears and even longer back legs, but most of all Kacj had taught him how to survive and to adapt to whatever his situation was; how to use every means at his disposal to ensure that he always found his way home again . . . it was this knowledge that was to serve him well now. Peering at a tall tree Roal noticed that one side was thick with a covering of moss and at the back of his mind nagged the words . . . "The north side of the trees always protect themselves from the cold winds of winter with a layer of moss". Hopefully Kacj would be right and now was the time to put this knowledge to the test. So armed with this information Roal quickly took stock of his bearings and then, taking one deep breath, struck out in the direction he hoped would lead him to his village . . .



With his sturdy little lags striding out for all thay ware worth and his arms pumping away by his sides Roal sped through the forest, occasionally laaping ova fallen branches and side-stepping around the large rocks that littered the path. It was one of these that was to prova his downfall, for as he steppad around the next ona to cross his path his foot slipped on some rotting leaves and he pitched forward onto his face. Some seconds passed whilst Roal gathered his wits and then looking up he was terrified to see the talons of a Korat dangling only inches from his nose . . . .

With visions of death and excruciating pain seering through his mind Roal clenched his eyas tightly shut and buried his face in the soft, moist leaves that littered the forest floor. For a few moments all was still and quiet and then to his great horror a scratching sensation was felt on the back of his head . . . . followed some seconds later by a sharp 'nudge' on the saat of his pants! Instantly his mind was fillad with the terrible talas of how the Korats disposed of their intended victims and of the macabre way in which they savored the legs of their prey from the upper part of their bodies in order that they were unable to flee to safety. Roal felt sure that this was about to happen to him and that the 'nudge' was simply the exploratory prod of the Korat's beak as it sought the best place on which to launch its gory attack. Faarling the worst Roal flattened himself as much as possibla and hugged the cool, moist aarth for all ha was worth . . . . but even he knew that this was a futile gesture . . . . a fact that was soon confirmed, as he found himself lifted aloft by the saat of his pants and danglad some distanca off the ground. Perhaps the Korat was toying with him and that it just wanted to extract the ultimata amount of 'plaasure' from the death of this young halfling, or perhaps he was about to be borne away to some high peak and once there, his bones would be picked over by the avil bird and its brood . . . . thasa and other such thoughts flashed through his mind and he resolvad to make one last effort to braak free of the clutches of the Korat.

Letting out an almighty cry, he squirmed this way and that, his legs flailing in all possible directions at once, but the craatura still held him in a vice-like grip . . . . then to his sudden amazement a rather gruff voica said "Stop wriggling young halfling, you are worse than a great sand-eel of the northern rivers!" Opening his eyes, Roal peered at the coarse face of the Grundar that was presently holding him at arm's langth and for a fleeting second his heart stoppad beating . . . . "Had he gone out of the frying-pan and into the fire?" was the thought that darted through his mind or was there some sort of salvation in this strange being that now held him aloft?

The Grundar gently lowered Roal to the ground and then, with its head half-cocked to one sida, said . . . . "What is a young halfling like you doing wandering this forast unprotected and just where were you going in such a hurry?" Amidst great gasps of breath, Roal related his tala of the sighting of the Korat war-band, his meeting with the surral and of his flight through the forest in a forlorn attempt to save his village at Torag Minh. Then overcome by amotion and shock, he slumpedad to the ground to be overwhelmed by a great soft darkness that blotted out the outside world.

Roal awoke to find himself propped against the base of a tall tree and glancing around he spied the large bulk of the Grundar some distance to the east. Carefully adjusting his feet and gathering his strength for an anticipated flight to freedom, Roal was astounded to haer the soft tones of the surral echoing in his ears . . . . "Grundars are the one thing they fear the most." . . . . and looking down ha saw two soft, amber eyes peering at him from banaath a pile of leaves.



The surreal emerged slowly and then seeing the puzzled look on Roal's face he said, "I thought you might need some help, so I have been following you as fast as my little legs would carry me. However it was only your recent collapse that enabled me to catch up." With that it scrambled onto Roal's right leg and sat there gazing at him. Reaching out a hand Roal stroked the small creature and a feeling of well-being surged over him. "That . . . is the only chance of saving your people," whispered the surreal, pointing in the direction of the great black shape that was the Grundar. "Go on, ask it for yourself if not for your people. It can only say 'NO!' and you have nothing to lose by trying." Roal took a deep breath, gave a shrug of his shoulders and slowly advanced towards the waiting Grundar . . . As Roal approached the squatting Grundar, he could not help but notice that it seemed to be deep in meditation . . . that is if Grundars ever did such a thing . . . for its gaze appeared fixed on some far-distant object and its breathing was shallow and slow. Then suddenly, without even the slightest movement of its head, the Grundar spoke. "Come closer young halfling, for I will do you no harm, or at least I won't as long as you bahava yourself and don't start making that walling noise that you halflings seem so fond of doing."

Edging slowly forward, Roal drew closer to the immobile Grundar and then with a sharp intake of breath within reach of the creature. Gradually the Grundar swivelled around to face the stock-still halfling, its warm breath disturbing the loose hairs that hung down over Roal's eyes. With a swift movement of its left hand it brushed aside the hairs and growled "That is better, at least I can see what you look like now." Never had such a large hand been so close to Roal's head before and he found himself fighting against an urge to close his eyes and jerk his head out of reach. The small veins in the side of his temples began to pulse wildly and just as it seemed that panic would prevail, the large creature seized Roal with his other hand and lifted him quickly towards himself. A strange 'musky' scent filled Roal's nostrils as he was drawn closer to the Grundar and he was vaguely reminded of the time when he spent a long dark night in the confines of the burrow of a Tarat . . . Kacj and he had been out hunting the blue creatures that hopped and skipped over the meadows of the vast grasslands, when a sudden storm had caused hem to seek warmth and shelter in the first place they would find . . . to Roal's disgust Kacj had chosen the spacious burrow of a Tarat, a plump round creature that lived on acorns and tree-roots, and liked nothing more than wallowing in a pile of semi-dry oak leaves. For days afterwards the smell of that burrow had clung to Roal and only a quick dip in the cool waters of a swiftly-flowing stream had enabled him to get rid of it . . . Roal sensed that perhaps he would be taking another dip in that stream, if only he survived long enough to find it again.

"You need my help", grunted the creature and before Roal could figure out whether it was asking a question or not, it continued "so I guess I can find the time to come to the aid of one who stands to lose all he loves most dearly in the world. The Korats can and will be stopped, of that you can be sure, but first you must promise me never to relate any of what you might see. You must tell nobody . . . understood, NOBODY!" Roal nodded in dumb silence and hoped that the Grundar would believe him. He would promise anything if only this mighty creature could halt the slaughter of his people at the talons of the Korats.





Rising to his feet the Grundar lifted Roal onto his left shoulder and then turned in the direction of the small surrel that was sat at the base of the tall tree. "We might as well take this 'thing' with us" it said and then scooped up the surrel and stuffed it into a small pouch that was hanging from its belt. Eager to familiarize itself with its new home the surrel stuck its head out of the neck of the pouch and gazed around. However the close proximity of the Korat's talon that also dangled from the belt was more than it could bear and it quickly ducked back inside the pouch. For a moment Roal thought he had heard a small chuckle merge itself with the cool forest air but surely Grundars never laughed, so he must have been mistaken.

"Hang on tight little one" grunted the creature, "we have a long way to go and only a very short time in which to get there." With that the Grundar began to make its way through the forest and head in the direction of Roal's village. In the confines of the small leather pouch the surrel smiled to itself and felt sure that Roal's people would not go down the same dark road that his own had done . . . the Grundar would see to that!

Roal was surprised and somewhat puzzled to see that there was no slackening in the pace of the Grundar as it sped through the forest, and at no point did it deviate from the path in order to seek out those other Grundars that Roal felt sure were to join them in their struggle against the Korats. Perched upon its shoulder, Roal clung on for dear life as the Grundar continued on its way, each stride eating up large chunks of the forest floor and bringing the approach of the inevitable battle ever closer.

Looking down at the pouch that was swinging precariously from the belt around the Grundar's waist, Roal wondered what the surrel was thinking at this time, and whether it was any the wiser in regard to the plans of this creature that was carrying them both to a meeting that neither wanted but neither could avoid if the fate of Roal's people was not to be decided by the sharpness of the talons and the quickness of the beaks of the armada of Korats presently heading in their direction.

Meanwhile, in the village, life continued as it has done for countless years, the daily tasks were undertaken and gossip exchanged with passing brethren. "Bit cold for this time of year," exclaimed Nann as she passed the hut of old Kacj and drawing nearer to his small camp-fire she continued, "Has Roal returned from his fishing-trip yet or is the little scamp still doing battle with those brown trout he loves so much?" A small smile wrinkled Kacj's forehead and looking up he said, "Don't worry, he will probably turn up later today, stinking of fish and bearing some outrageous tale of the 'big one' that got away." Just then something caused him to glance in the direction of the far horizon and Nann could see his old eyes screw up in effort as he tried to focus on a small dark patch that was barely discernible in the distance. Nann looked in the direction of his stare but the dark patch had vanished behind a fluffy cloud and she turned her head once more to the comforting glow of the small fire. "Well this won't get them pots washed, so I best get off home and set about cleaning up before his lord and master gets back." With that Nann smiled down at old Kacj and headed in the direction of her dwelling. If she had but looked back she would have seen a flicker of recognition as the dark patch emerged from behind the cloud and Kacj remembered a time when such sights were more than commonplace. As the thoughts crawled across his mind he reached down to the hilt of the small dagger tucked into his belt and closed his fingers tightly around it.

In the confines of the pouch the surrel braced itself the best it could against the constant buffeting and reminded itself that perhaps it had not been such a good idea after all to have become involved with this young halfling and his problems; then a warm sadness gripped its heart and it remembered times when surrels darted hither and thither across the floor of the forest and their excited chirping could be heard echoing across the land . . . as a moistness filled its eyes, it thrust aside all doubts and vowed that the halfling would have all the help it could possibly give.

From his precarious perch on the Grundar's shoulder Roal glanced up and in the distance the greenery of the forest seemed thinner and the light seemed much brighter. "Surely they could not be approaching the edge of the forest already?" was the thought that ran through his mind, but as he stared ahead of himself the trees did indeed begin to thin out and he knew that they were almost on the edge of the grasslands that served as the northernmost boundary of Tousel. "Just a few moments more and they would be 'home' but where were the rest of the Grundars? Surely this great creature that presently bore him aloft was not intending to take on the might of Korats single-handed?" These thoughts hammered away inside his head and chipped bits off the wall-of-confidence that the meeting with the Grundar had installed there. "Not even he can take on the Korats in such large numbers and live to tell the tale," thought Roal and gripping the Grundar by the ear he screamed in an hysterical voice . . . "Where are all the others?????" For just an instant the pace of the creature slackened and its head turned in the direction of the tiny halfling. "Have faith little one, I will not let you down," and with that the Grundar once more strode off in the direction of the edge of the forest and Roal's village.

Sprinting into the open meadowland, the Grundar placed itself between the village and the oncoming armada and then reaching up with one hand, gently plucked the halfling from his lofty perch and placed him on the ground. "Now is the hour young halfling, it is time to see if Korat blood still runs as swiftly as it has always done." Roal glanced up at the mighty creature towering over him and though his heart swelled with pride at the way the Grundar was ready to lay down his own life for that of the people of the village, he could not help but doubt the ability of a lone Grundar to bring down the might of the massed army of Korats that was presently winging its way towards them.

"How about me?" squeaked a small voice from the confines of the pouch that was dangling from the Grundar's belt and for a moment a half-smile flicked across the creature's craggy visage. Unhooking the drawstring of the pouch from around his belt, the Grundar stretched open the neck, shook the pouch and deposited the surrel on the damp grass beside Roal. "Hmmph!" it cried, preening its bent whiskers back into shape. "It is about time I was let out of that smelly darkness!" and then peered around at its surroundings. The sight of the approaching Korats was the first thing to catch his eye and just at that moment in time the smelly old pouch seemed a more than welcome haven.

High aloft the 'outriders' of the armada spotted the tiny band of travellers standing between them and their intended target and swooped down to investigate, their talons extended and their beaks open in anticipation. As the wind whistled through their flight-feathers they gathered speed at an alarming rate and were soon within striking distance of the trio. Then suddenly a spark of recognition registered with the lead 'outrider' and it broke off its attack and swooped away to one side. The second 'outrider' was not so quick and the last thing it saw was the grinning features of the Grundar as it reached out and plucked the Korat from the air by the throat. Less than three seconds later the Korat's crumpled body lay at the feet of the creature and its talons hung from its belt . . . the first 'trophy' of this particular battle had been taken!

Open-mouthed Roal gawped at the talons and the blood that was dripping from them to form a small pool by the left foot of the Grundar . . . "Close your mouth little one" growled the creature, "or else one of those darg-flies might just decide to fly in there!" Roal did just that and then stepped further away from the smell pool of blood where the darg-flies were now gathering in their thousands.

Overhead the Korats now whirled in uncertainty and seemed very reluctant to continue their approach. This puzzled Roal, for surely even blood-thirsty predators such as them had nothing to fear from one solitary Grundar. As Roal gazed at the wheeling mass of birds two 'outriders' left the flock and set out on their respective journeys . . . one to the east and the other to the west . . . as though in search of something or somebody!

A deep rumbling noise caused Roal to break off from his study of the Korats and he turned in the direction of the noise. To his surprise the Grundar was sat cross-legged on the grass, eyes tightly closed and head bowed. In one hand it held a small greenish-coloured stone and in the other hand a small sphere pulsed with a bluish light. The rumbling noise was coming from the creature's mouth, for it appeared to be chanting some strange incantation but Roal was not sure what as the 'words' were totally incomprehensible to him.

Just then the 'outriders' returned and wheeled aloft before rejoining the armada. The Grundar sensed their return and rose to its feet, placing the stone and the sphere on the ground as it did so. Then raising itself to its full height it extended its arms and let out an almighty cry. To Roal it sounded like a cry of pain but to the surreal it sounded like the cry of one who was ready to join his ancestors . . . both of them were mistaken. However, to the Korats hovering high above, the cry meant only one thing . . . this day would end with the talons of many more Korats dangling from a Grundar belt.

Once more the Grundar raised its arms aloft, took a deep breath and cried . . . "GRAAAFKHARI"

As the last remnants of the Grundar's cry echoed their way into the distance, the sky darkened and a heavy grey mist began to descend onto the meadowlands. Lowering its arms to its side, the creature turned to the small halfling . . . "Now is the time little one, so remember what I said and never tell anyone of what you are about to see." Roal nodded in dumb understanding and edged slightly closer to the Grundar, who seeing this movement reached out a large hand and gently guided the halfling into place. "No, it will be safer for you if you stand directly behind me and then I can always be between you and those 'birds'." The last word almost spat from between the lips and Roal sensed the intense hatred that the Grunder nurtured for the Korats.

Taking his place in the shadow of the mighty creature, Roal felt a small drop of water trickle down his neck and glancing up, noticed that 'rain' was beginning to fall from the grey cloud. As he did so, he could not help but notice that high above him the Korats milled as though in confusion and seemed reluctant to press home their attack. It was as if they were awaiting the arrival of something or somebody.



Meanwhile, back at the village, old Kacj looked up from the warmth of his fire and a sense of unease hung heavy over him. To the north he could see a rainstorm approaching, though this one was unlike any normal storm and reminded him of the ones his father had told him of. It had been said that such storms heralded the arrival of the Grundar and that even after their passing, the ground upon which they fell remained perfectly dry to the touch. Legend had it that the Grundar came and went under the cover of these storms and that no creature had ever lived to see their movements . . . but that was 'legend' and surely such things never actually happened. Kacj drew his blanket tightly around his shoulders and tried to see through the greyish coloured mist that hung over the meadowlands but it was too dense and the vast majority of the grasslands, and the lands beyond them, were obscured from his view.

As the 'rain' became heavier Roal looked down in the direction of the small surrel squatting at his feet and was puzzled to see a look of fear on the small creature's face. "I have heard of these things," whispered the surrel, "and my people have always lived in awe of being out in the open when the 'Grey Rain' comes." With that, it closed its eyes and covered its head with its paws.

Just then Roal 'sensed' rather than noticed a change in his surroundings and quickly glanced to his right and then to his left. To his astonishment, where each raindrop had fallen there now stood a fully-armed Grundar warrior and as he watched, more appeared until there were hundreds of them stretching out as far as the eye can see.

High aloft the Korats did their best to peer through the mist but even their sharp eyes were no match for the dense grey blanket that covered the ground below them. Many times before they had encountered this mist and many times before they had swooped into it never to return again. However this time was to be so different, for beneath that mist stood one lone Grundar and their compulsion to destroy it was too strong for them to resist. . . . If only one of their kind had been able to return from a journey into the mist then maybe they would have known just what awaited them, and how wrong their assumptions were.

With a mighty "Kraaaakk!!!" the lead bird dove into the mist. The armada of Korats followed, each intent on being the first to draw blood from the creature waiting for them below. Their 'blood-lust' was up and nothing would now deter them from slaking their thirst for Grundar blood.

As the Korats emerged from out of the grey mist, beaks agape and talons glistening, the sight of the massed ranks of Grundar warriors was almost more than the birds could believe and panic took over from aggression. Wings flapped frantically in an attempt to avoid the deadly thrusts of the Grundar swords and loud squawks were emitted as the Korats attempted to rise to the air again and the comparative safety of the open sky. Black-feathered bodies swooped this way and that in a vain effort to elude the unerring accuracy of the Grundar's blades, but the ensuing chaos only helped to make the Grundar's task even easier.

From behind the vast bulk of his protector, Roal watched in awe at the slaughter of the Korats and at the manner in which the Grundars dispatched them. Swords soon lost their shine as the Korat's blood ran forth, their edges taking on a crimson hue as the blades bit deep into their targets. One by one the Korats were chopped down in flight and their talons, in some cases still twitching, clipped to the belts of the triumphant Grundars. Soon the air was heavy with the sickly smell of warm blood and the buzzing of the thousands of darg-flies attracted by the blood almost overwhelmed the very sound of the battle itself.

Throughout all this the surrel remained with its paws covering its head and its eyes tightly closed, and it was not until the headless body of a Korat hurtled to the ground next to it that anything changed. Hearing the dull thud and smelling the sickly-sweet odour, the surrel opened its eyes just in time to witness the last convulsions of the dying bird before a large hairy hand reached down, seized the Korat by the talons and deftly removed them with a swipe of a sword. The surrel shuddered and then looked away, but something to the southern edge of the meadowlands caught its eye and it tried to focus on that.

Completely taken by surprise, the Korats were unable to make any account of themselves and the battle was short-lived. As the last of the Korats was put to the sword the grey mist lifted and the sky began to lighten in colour. The noise of the gorging darg-filles was almost deafening but then, if as one, the Grundars clapped their hands and the darg-filles took flight . . . they knew better than to stay. Their time would always come again and now was not the moment to risk incurring the wrath of the Grundars.

Just as the last of the grey mist swirled away the creatures took their places in line again and with heads bowed began to chant. This time the words were more gently, tinged with a touch of serenity and altogether different from the harsh cry that had summoned them. Then, as Roal looked on, the Grundars went as they had come, leaving only the scattered dead bodies of the Korats as a sign of their passing. The one who had befriended the young halfling was the only one who remained and it was now busily engaged in the ritual with the stone and the sphere, completely oblivious to all that surrounded it.

The speck to the south still intrigued the surrel and it strained its tiny eyes in one last effort to ascertain what it was. To its immense horror it suddenly recognised what it was looking at . . . it was a Korat . . . obviously an 'outrider' that had not rejoined the flock in time to take part in the attack. However having seen its compatriots put to the sword it intended to make its mark on the small party of three and by the looks of things the small halfling that had brought death and destruction to its companions was its ultimate target. The surrel turned quickly to warn Roal but for some inexplicable reason found that it was not able to make any sort of vocal noises . . . it was as if the words were frozen in its throat! Glancing back over its shoulder it was all too obvious that this lone Korat was hell-bent on its task and judging by the speed at which it was approaching there was very little time to waste, so it sank its teeth into Roal's leg! "Hey! What in the name of Rodar is going on!" screeched Roal, turning to face the surrel.

As the small black speck grew larger and the true flight-path of the lone Korat became more evident, Roal knew that 'death' was but a brief moment away and memories of the 'feel' of a Korat's talon rippling through flesh and the smell of warm blood, came flooding into his head. On that occasion he had been lucky, but dancing with old death once and living to tell the tale was no solace at a time like this. To stay where he was would surely mean that the Korat would strike its target, gouging and slashing as it came. Anxious to avoid such a fate Roal flung himself to one side and landed with a thump on the ground to his left. As he did so his hand struck a cold metallic object and he quickly snatched it away again, then glancing up he noticed that where he had once stood there was now a clear path to the unprotected back of the squatting Grundar. The creature, still engrossed in its ritual act, was completely oblivious of the approach of the speeding Korat . . .



For a moment it seemed as if the surrel was still struck dumb, as it still stood rooted to the spot with not a sound emanating from its mouth. Then suddenly it managed to stir itself into action and to find the words it had been seeking to emit. "Use the sword!" It yelled in the direction of the prone Roal. "Use the sword and protect the Grundar!" but its words were feeble and barely carried across the open space between it and the halfling.

Still stunned by his landing, Roal shook his head and the buzzing in his ears eased for a second. As if as spoken from a long distance away, some words drifted into his ears . . . "Use . . sword . . Grundar!" He shook his head fiercely in an attempt to clear his mind, surely the surrel did not want him to kill the Grundar. After all had it not been the one responsible for their well-being and had it, and its kind, not risked their very existence to save his village from destruction at the talons of the Korats? But the words kept drifting in and out of his head . . . "Use . . sword . . Grundar!" In a final attempt to bring some sanity to the events now taking place Roal gave himself a sharp slap to the forehead and this time the words were a shade clearer . . . "Use . . sword . . protect . . Grundar!"

Totally bemused by Roal's reluctance to pick up the sword and defend the unprotected back of the creature currently deep in 'prayer', the surrel bounced up and down, waving his arms in the air and yelling for the halfling to take hold of the sword.

Reaching out Roal seized the hilt of the sword in his right hand and quickly turned to face the oncoming bird. Stepping swiftly to his right he lunged forward and felt the sword strike home. There was a sound of tearing flesh, the warm smell of blood and the sword was ripped from his hand. Amidst a cloud of feathers and blood Roal was knocked to the floor and something large and heavy descended upon him, a sharp talon raking his cheek as he fell. The next he knew was the approach of a soft warm darkness and his fight was over.

"Come, come little one. It is over and done with now and there is nothing to fear from those birds ever again." Roal slowly opened his eyes and found himself gazing up at the coarse features of the Grundar. "That was a very brave thing you did there and if you had not acted as you had I would have been skewered through the heart by the Korat's beak." As Roal sat up, his head ringing and his cheek stinging with pain, he looked to one side and shuddered. For there on the ground lay the crumpled body of the bird, the sword still embedded in its breast. Just then the Grundar reached across, withdrew the sword from the bird and hacked off the talons. "Take these" the creature grunted, "and hang them proudly from your belt, for you are now truly a 'Grundar-Warrior'." With that the Grundar rose to its feet, patted the surrel on the head and turned to the northern horizon. "My people await me and I must go, so take care young halfling and remember our exploits." In less than the twinkling of an early evening star the creature was gone.

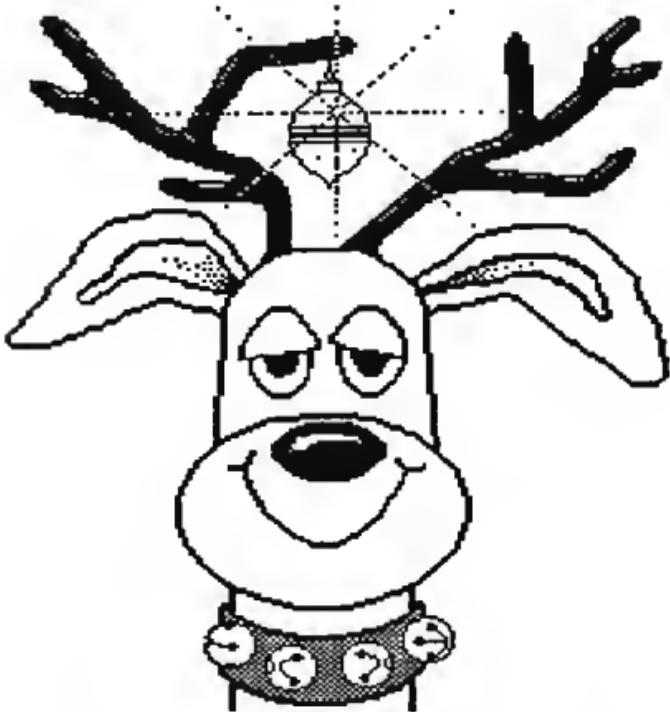
In the years to come Roal and the surrel would often reflect on the fishing trip that went wrong and of their encounter with the Grundar and his people, and of how one small halfling came to possess a pair of Korat talons.

THE END





TO ALL ADVENTURE PROBE READERS  
HAVE A HAPPY CHRISTMAS



AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR